BLUE BOOK

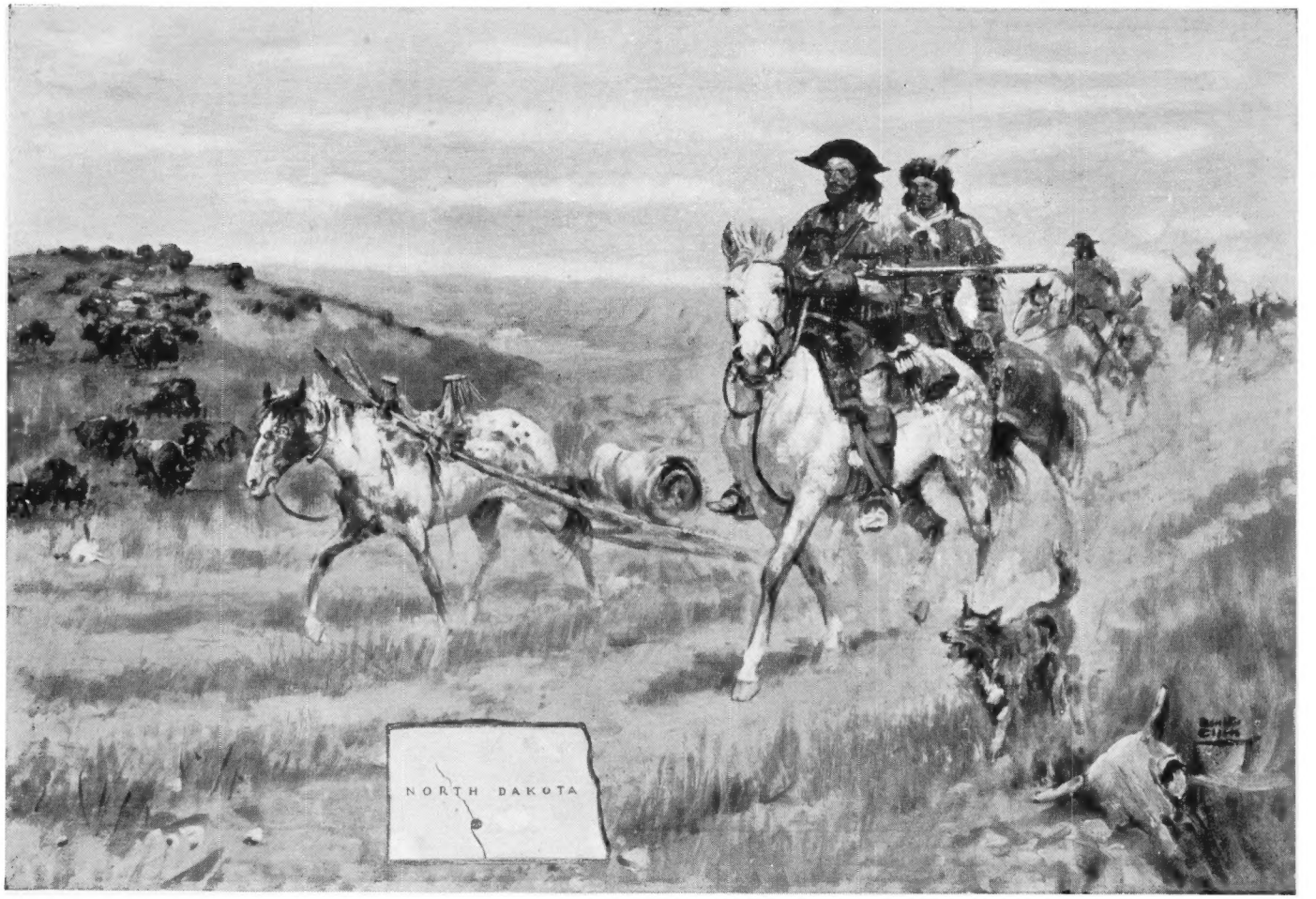
MAGAZINE
APRIL, 1950
25 Cents

THESE UNITED STATES...XXXIX
North Dakota—*Painted by Benton Clark*

A Complete Book-Length Novel
VERY COLD FOR MAY
by William McGivern

GRIFT SHOW PARADE
A Novelette *by Robert Barbour Johnson*

Nine short stories...Eight articles and features



THESE UNITED STATES . . . XXXIX—NORTH DAKOTA

The Sioux State

LA VERENDRYE, a French-Canadian fur trader and explorer, was the first white man to set foot in the region we now know as North Dakota. On this expedition he lost a son and nephew, murdered by the Sioux on Massacre Island, Lake of the Woods. However, his two remaining sons and two *voyageurs* pressed forward, reaching, in 1743, a point in the Black Hills where they buried a leaden plate inscribed with the date. One hundred and seventy years later this plate was unearthed, a reminder of the courage and persistence of La Verendrye which opened a vast region to the French fur trade, and pointed the way to the overland route to the Pacific.

During the winter of 1804-1805 the Lewis and Clark Expedition stopped near Fort Mandan, on the Missouri River. Seeking a guide through the Rocky Mountains, they secured the services of Toussant Charbonneau, a trapper. Charbonneau knew the mountains; but it was his wife, Sakakawea, a Shoshone Indian, who served the expedition best. Her influence broke the Shoshone blockade for the route of the expedition. And later it was she who pointed out to Clark the famous Bozeman Pass. Today on the grounds of the State Capitol at Bismarck there stands a statue of Sakakawea, whose name means "Bird Woman"—an appropriate name for the girl who contributed so largely to the westward course of the nation.

Nearly three-quarters of a century later, in 1876, from Fort Abraham Lincoln, near the present city of Mandan, General George Armstrong Custer proudly led his troops forth to battle. Not many weeks later the fort was deep in mourning, for that battle was the Little Big Horn, in Montana, in which Custer and all his men were killed.

In 1889 the State was formed by an act of Congress, which divided the Territory of Dakota into North and South Dakota. Today the State has an area of 70,837 square miles with a population of 706,000.

A total of eighty-seven per cent of the acreage of North Dakota is farm land. The State ranks first in spring wheat and barley, and second in all wheat and third in rye. "Number One Northern Hard," a famous grain grading, defines a premium wheat which originated in North Dakota.

In the Turtle Mountains on the northern border of the State, the Peace Garden commemorates long years of continuous peace with Canada. Bismarck, the capital, has recorded the greatest U. S. temperature extremes—from 114° above to 45° below zero.

The geographical center of North America is in North Dakota, in Pierce County, about twenty miles northeast of the town that bears today the name of the explorer Verendrye.

Readers' Comment

Letter of Criticism

So you solicit criticism? Well—the female element in my home doesn't appreciate your magazine. It seems there's not enough blah-blah about domestic stuff to suit the wife, not enough sentimental slush to give my teen-ager the tremors.

So that leaves me the sole contender for BLUE BOOK in This Man's Family. And, if you think that makes me blue, you're color-blind. I'm tickled pink!

The stories make me forget that I'm just a humdrum wage-earner. I plunge into each adventure side by side with the hero; I startle the world with my daredevilish escapades; I throttle the villain with my own bare hands, and sometimes, glory be, I even make love to the heroine!

—LARRY CARTER.

About "The Secret Poison"

As a Chinese raised in China, I've made a rule not to read fiction about China in American magazines. First, the illustrations would oftentimes drive the illusion out of the window before I start reading. In them the Chinese characters are sometimes still dressed in costume of the Ming Dynasty, though there are automobiles and telephones in the story.

In the January BLUE BOOK, I was surprised at the realistic qualities of the illustrations of the story "The Secret Poison." Right away I plunged into the story, and scene after scene unfolded before my eyes as if I were carried back to China. The writing was surprisingly realistic, too.

Congratulations! —CHIN LI.

History a Living Thing

AFTER a hard day's work my husband battles his way home through a noisy throng to a houseful of noisy children. Dinner is anything but peaceful, and afterwards it's a riot until bedtime. Then peace, quiet and his BLUE BOOK, and he's soon back to normal.

You may be sure that that is the book I grab, too, when I am looking for escape. I know that there I'll find no recipes or "how-to-dos" to remind me of unfinished work, no psychological problems to recall of my own.

We've both been reading BLUE BOOK for years and years, and do not hesitate to hand it to our young sons and daughters. For them it makes history a living thing, satisfies that hunger for adventure that is a part of every boy and girl, young and old, and lacks the slushy love mush that boys hate. We all like the historical stories best. Let's have more of them.

—MOYNELLE STEVENSON BLESSUM.

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A Complete Book-Length Novel

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Painted by Benton Clark

The short stories and novels herein are fiction and intended as such. They do not refer to real characters or actual events. If the name of any living person is used, it is a coincidence.

PHILLIPS WYMAN, *Publisher* — DONALD KENNICOTT, *Editor*

BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE is published each month simultaneously in the United States and Canada by McCall Corporation. Marvin Pierce, President; Lowell Shumway, Vice-President and Circulation Director; Francis Hutter, Secretary; J. D. Hartman, Treasurer. Publication and Subscription Offices: McCall Street, Dayton 1, Ohio. Executive and Editorial Offices: 444 Madison Ave., New York 22, N. Y. MANUSCRIPTS and ART MATERIAL will be carefully considered but will be received only with the understanding that the publisher and editors shall not be responsible for loss or injury. SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION: $2.50 for one year; $4.00 for two years; $6.00 for three years in U. S. and Pan-American countries (Add $1.00 per year for other countries); $1.80 for one year; $3.60 for two years; $5.40 for three years in Canada. Send all remittances and correspondence about subscriptions to our publication office, McCall Street, Dayton 1, Ohio. IF YOU PLAN TO MOVE SOON please notify us four weeks in advance because subscription lists are addressed in advance of publication date and extra postage is charged for forwarding. When sending notice of change of address give old address as well as new, preferably clipping name and old address from last copy received. APRIL ISSUE, 1950, VOL. LXXXX, No. 6.

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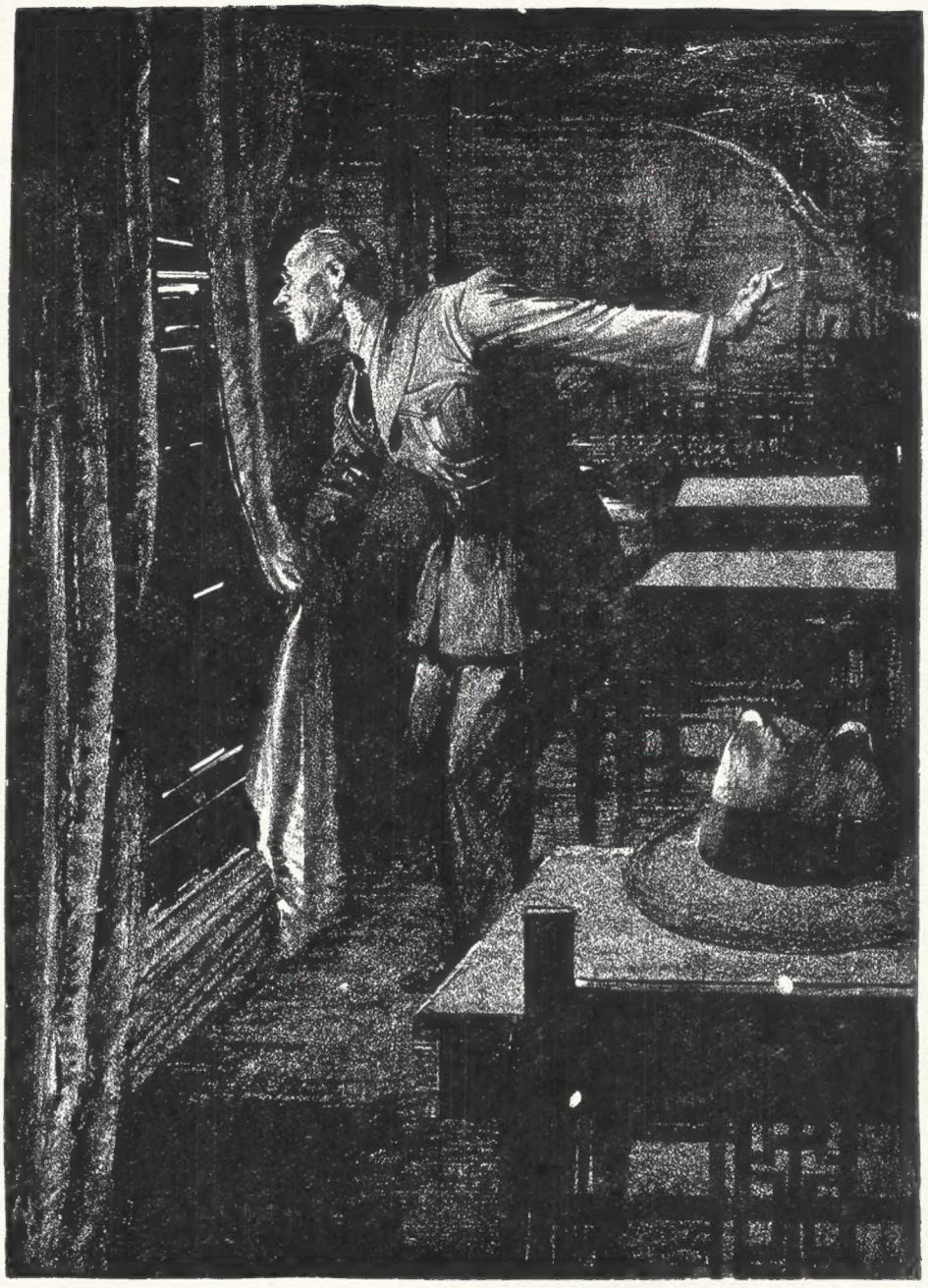
Printed in U.S.A

Entered as second-class matter November 12, 1930, at the Post Office at Dayton, Ohio, under the Act of March 3, 1879

THERE HAVE BEEN MANY FINE PEOPLE, BRITISH AND AMERICAN, STRIVING TO CARRY THE WHITE MAN'S BURDEN IN THE ORIENT. THIS IS NOT A STORY ABOUT THEM, BUT ABOUT THE LEGION OF THE LOST ONES, THE COHORT OF THE DAMNED.



Rendezvous

by ROBERT PATTERSON

We're most of us liars, we're 'arf of us thieves, an' the rest are as rank as can be,
But once in a while we can finish in style (which I 'ope it won't happen to me).

THE staccato clatter of machine-gun fire rattled dismally down North Szechuan Road, and Sing Yat-ming moved briskly from window to window, making sure the shutters were closed. It was plenty important that no glimmer of light should filter through to the Japanese patrols that were foraging through the streets of Shanghai's Hongkew district like packs of vicious wolves.

It had been a very bad day.

Shortly after six the evening before, the news of the attack on Pearl Harbor had been announced over Radio XHMA. Then the Japanese had spilled out of the Imperial Naval Landing Force barracks in smugly malign hordes, taking over the town according to precise plan.

Part of the Foreign Settlement, across Hongkew Creek, still held out under the spirited defense of the Fourth Marines, Royal Ulster Rifles and what remained of the Shanghai Defense Corps. The Whangpoo was still open to the sea, for the Chinese Eighty-eighth Central Division held the Woosung Forts commanding the river's entrance and the approach to the great muddy Yang T'ze Kiang. The American and British gunboats were energetically taking off their nationals from the Settlement Bund.

But it was just a question of time. The Japanese encircled the city from Nantao, Chapei, Hongkew, Pootung and the nondescript regions beyond the Settlement's western limits. Already Nipponese patrols were thrusting into the remote residential sections of the foreign concession. It was just a matter of time.

Hongkew was becoming a desolate shambles; a bloody playground for Japanese lust, viciousness and reprisal. Bodies, like discarded rag dolls, were scattered through the streets and alleys. Storefronts were shattered, and boxes and cases which had contained goods were strewn about their entrances. Rickshas stood deserted in mid-street. An enormous bearded Sikh policeman hung grotesquely upright at the intersection of Boone and North Szechuan roads, impaled on his own traffic signal. There were sporadic bursts of gunfire as the Japanese groped venomously through the gathering twilight.

SING YAT wasn't sure what he was going to do, but for the present he was going to lie low. The Moon Palace Hotel wasn't a prosperous enough establishment to attract the invaders' attention for a while. After the Astor House, the Embankment Apartments and Broadway Mansions and the other first-class hostelries had been taken over, the Japs might get around to his dubious little dump, which lay close to notorious Jukong Alley on North Szechuan Road. But that would be tomorrow, at least.

Downstairs, the restaurant was quiet, deserted, barred to the street. On the second floor the cabaret was dark and shuttered too, and a hungry cat padded silently across the dance-

at Sing Yat's

"Douse the light," he ordered with calmness. "We've got visitors—Nips, I think."

floor. The hotel rooms were long deserted; the guests dispersed to the streets, to the temporary security of the Settlement, to rat-holes of their own, to the morgue, the river.

The long front room, with balconied French windows on the street, felt curiously secure to Sing Yat. Perhaps his feeling came from the knowledge that this room, specially shuttered and curiously well-ventilated, had often frustrated the nightly scrutinies of the police.

It was a place of many conveniences. Visiting war lords from the interior had held clandestine conferences here. Many a case of illicitly imported armament had been sold across the teak tables that dominated the center of the low-ceilinged room. Shanghai's gown-garbed underworldlings had met here to discuss when, and where, and who, and how much. And more recently, the sweet fumes of the poppy nepenthe had cloyed the air.

It was made to order for the present situation, and the stout, bull-necked Chinese in the green silk gown felt very secure. Tomorrow? Sing Yat would start thinking about tomorrow—tomorrow.

He had barely settled himself in one of the uncomfortable straight-backed teak chairs when he was startled into listening rigidity by the sound of movement below. It was a stealthy sound. Sing knew that there would be nothing stealthy about the movements of the invader. He moved swiftly to the door, opened it, stood at the head of the stairs, peering down

into the darkness of the vestibule below. *"Nung senegah?"* he queried in terse, abrupt Chinese. No reply. "Who come?" he tried, in English.

"Keep your girdle on, Sing," came a voice from the shadows. "It's me, Joe—Joe Black. Just looking for a place to light and refuel."

There was relief and exasperation in the voice of the Chinese. "Wha' for you come here? Why you no go Settlement? This bad place now, Joe."

The other climbed the stairs and emerged from the shadows. "I've been holed up in the Red Rose since midnight. Me and the rats. I never seen so many rats! Then today about noon a patrol broke into the place. I heard them get the Russky doorman who was hiding in the cloakroom—they topped him right there on the spot, the poor dope! So I lammed to the roof, made it down to Sam Levy's Venus, then down to your back door. Figured to stash myself here until late tonight. Then I'll try to cop a sneak into the Settlement."

"You close—lock—back door, Joe?" The Chinaman's tone was kindly but alert.

"Sure thing. What *you* gonna do yourself, Sing?"

"I do' know. Maybe-so more late tonight I catch sampan at Yangtzepoo. My friend—cousin—have got. Then maybe-so I go more-far Ningpo. If Japanese man no catch." He smiled wryly.

The American was a slim, strongly-built character, about thirty-three. He had the indefinable look of what the underworld calls "a sharpie." His eyes were set too close together, and looked at you from beneath drooping lids. There was a twist to his rare smile. There was something vaguely unfriendly about his manner, something vaguely menacing. And yet there was a strange directness about him that added up to some kind of firmness of character.

He was dressed in a rather too-well-tailored blue serge suit, with a faint vertical stripe. He wore no shirt, but a pale blue jersey which fitted high and snug around his neck. On his ring finger was a good-sized diamond. A neat, dark-blue hat, with a rather wide brim turned down all around.

Sing offered him a cigarette. They lit up, casting flickering reflections about the room. It was definitely night now, and the single oil lamp which was swung from the ceiling on a pulley gave only the mildest relief from the darkness.

"How you make with Settlement police, Joe? Maybe-so more better you come with me. Or take chance with Japanese? How you say in English—frying-pan into fire?"

The other shrugged, and flicked his cigarette into a glow.

"Hell, I'm clear. There *was* a kind of a beef—some hot silk out of Wing On's godown, but their comprador's Korean clerk was the only witness against me, and I hear the Nips drilled him over in Pootung last week. So—" He gestured the rest of it.

A sound overhead. Something on the roof. A brisk, hurried sound. Someone running.

The two men froze, immobile, not breathing. Then Sing strode quickly but soundlessly to the corridor. He stood listening in the dark. Joe Black, at his elbow, grasped a trim, deadly braided sap. Someone was vainly trying to lift a trapdoor which gave ingress to the ceiling of the corridor. Then not so vainly: the catch on the trapdoor gave, and a blue patch of the night sky was visible overhead. Silhouetted in the square was a man's head and torso. He stared down at the shadowy figures beneath him in the corridor.

"I say there—I'm coming down." He started to suit his action to his words, climbing awkwardly down onto a ladder nailed against the inner wall. The two below watched him without comment.

When he faced them, they saw a stout, middle-aged individual, well-dressed, hatless. His graying hair was askew above a pink, puffy perspiration-beaded face. He pulled a large linen handkerchief from his pocket and mopped his brow. He was jittery and breathless.

"I hope I didn't alarm you, gentlemen. Truth is, I was in a beastly situation—very nasty, very nasty. I'm Smith-Haddon—the China Seaboard Bank." He mopped some more, and opened his collar.

"I was transacting some business at the Hongkew branch, Bank of China—down the corner, you know, when those blighters sprang their blitz. The manager and I and a number of clerks closed the place, and it seemed as if we might hold out until our people came for us. . . . I was able to get through to the Settlement on the telephone. Then I went into the office of the manager—to wait, you know; and I dozed off in a chair there. When I awoke, I was alone. The others had dusted off without me, the filthy beggars! This afternon the Nips came, and by Jove, I had barely time to hop it up over the roof before they stove in the front door. I've been trying to get in somewhere ever since, pulling at trapdoors on every roof on the block. I tell you, it's been jolly bad."

"Too bad." Joe Black didn't seem too sympathetic.

"You come in room, please," Sing took things as they came. While they were entering the front room, the American climbed the ladder to the aperture above, replaced the trapdoor, and started down again. As his foot left the bottom rung, he was suddenly transfixed again, for there were sounds in the building below.

Someone was fumbling around there. Then came the sound of ascent—more than one person. Joe stepped lightly to the door of the front room, closed it, melted back into the shadows behind the stairs.

Three persons emerged on the landing. In the feeble glimmer that sifted through the transom above the door, Black could see a man and two women. The man wore a uniform cap. He was using a flashlight which he snapped off when he reached the head of the stairs.

"Looks as if there's someone here," said the man in the cap. He knocked lightly on the door. There was a short silence, and the light inside flickered out.

"I say, in there; it's all right. I am a police officer, with two ladies. Kindly open up." There was silence. "Perhaps," he said, in a whispered aside to the women, "perhaps I'd better try them in Chinese—" But at that point the door opened.

The policeman flashed on his light again to illuminate Sing and the banker standing just inside the doorway. "I'm Detective-Inspector Eustace, and I— Oh, *good evening,* Mr. Smith-Haddon! How the devil—"

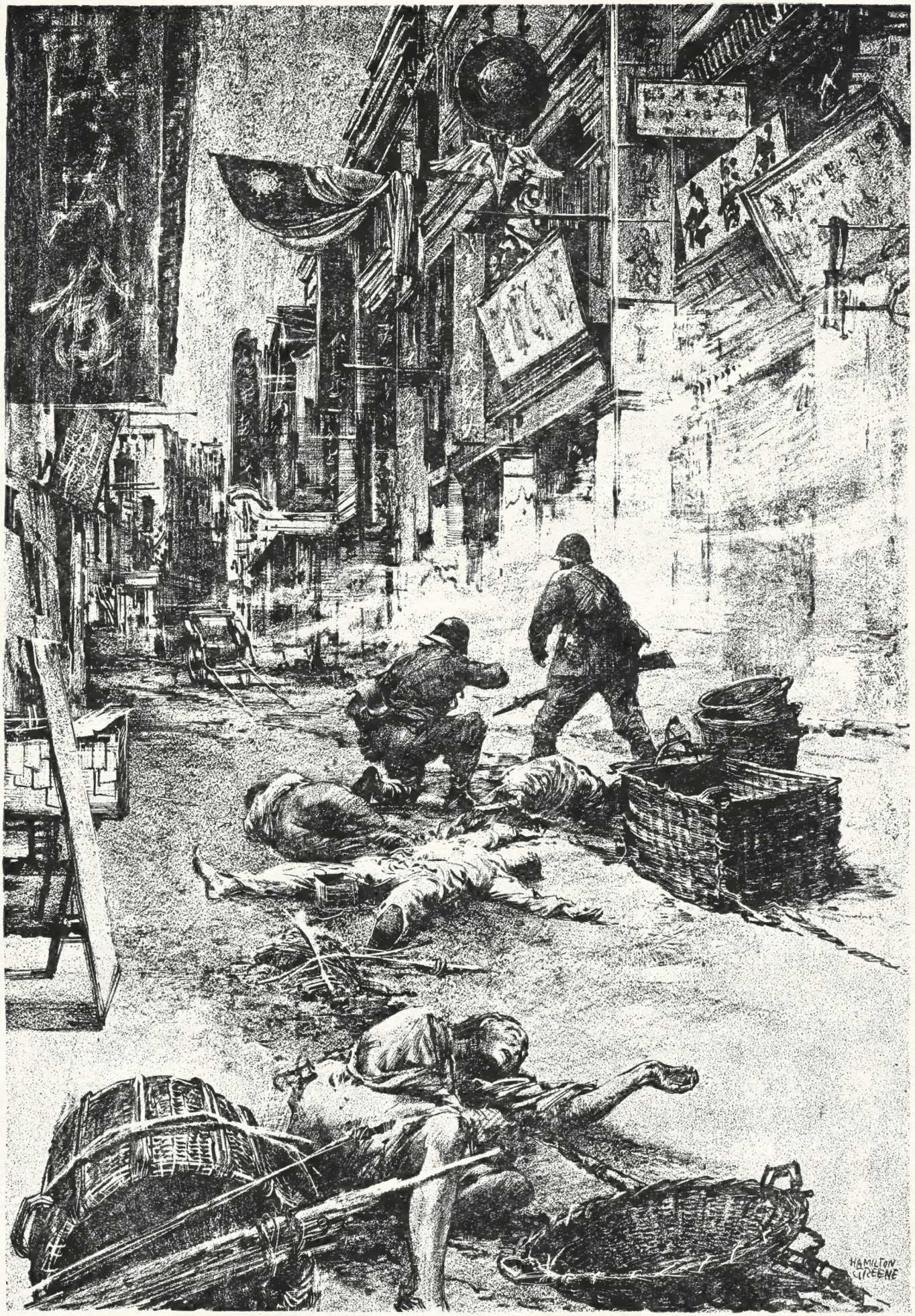
"Glad to see you, Inspector. Did you get caught too?"

"Quite. Was making rounds out in the Wayside area. Been dodging ever since. Door-to-door stuff. Very sticky business. Came onto this lady"—he gestured to his right—"stalled in her car on lower Broadway. Huddled there, and frightened to death. This other young woman we encountered just down the street. We made up a sort of convoy and tried to find a spot where we could dig in until later tonight. Thought we might get through to the Settlement then. Knew about old Sing Yat's place here, and found the back door open."

The Chinese shot an accusing glance at Joe Black, who was standing unobtrusively back of the newcomers, then courteously turned to his guests with an invitation to step into the room and sit down. The oil lamp was relit, and the strangely assorted company looked curiously around at each other.

The Inspector, clad in the blue broadcloth of the Shanghai Muncipal Police, was a typical British Far Eastern constabulary officer: pink-cheeked, shrewd, superciliously austere, smart and trim from his glistening boots to his sandy toothbrush mustache.

Hongkew was becoming a desolate shambles; a bloody playground for the Japanese.


HAMILTON GREENE

The one to whom he had referred as "a lady" was an attractive and fashionably dressed woman in her late thirties. The other one, "the woman," was younger, slimmer and much better shaped.

She had an excellent profile, and it ran right down to her ankles. Her hair was braided and the braids coiled around her head, Russian-style. She wore one of the *outré,* ultra-flamboyant frocks affected by Russian women of the Frenchtown White Russian quarter, but she wore it well. Though she was obviously frightened, she was also somewhat defiant, aloof, restrained—on the defensive.

"I am Mrs. Carstairs." The older woman spoke with all the poise in the world. She might have been in her own drawing-room. "Major Carstairs, with the Lancashires, you know. I know it was silly of me, with all this trouble plainly in sight, but I drove down into Hongkew yesterday afternoon in search of an old servant, an amah I wanted to get safely into the Settlement. Silly, I know. When I saw the Nip soldiers, I drove my car onto the China Merchants pier and spent the night there, safely enough. I tried to make a dash for the Settlement. My motor conked out, and—" She gestured toward the Inspector.

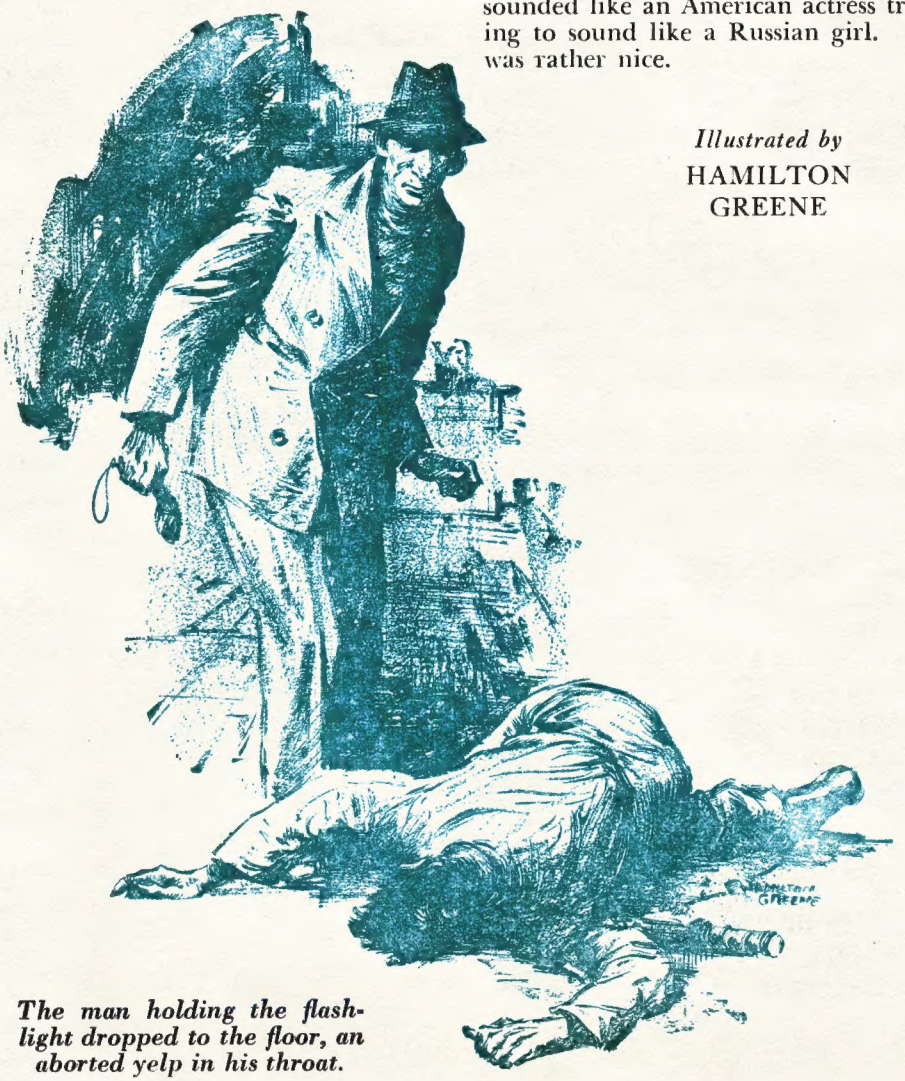
"I came along. Glad to be of assistance, Mrs. Carstairs." He smiled and bowed with a gallantry that was somewhat fatuous under the circumstances. Then with a rather different note to his voice he turned to the "woman."

"And you, young lady?"

The "young lady" smiled thinly, shrugged daintily and glanced obliquely at the policeman from beneath lowered lids as she spoke.

"Me, I just happened along. I am Sonya Michkova, a Russian. I am an entertainer." She emphasized the last word, as if she expected an argument on the subject. There was a silence. White Russians had little prestige in Shanghai in those days. White Russian cabaret girls had none. Smith-Haddon cleared his throat. Mrs. Carstairs stared amusedly at the other woman's clothes. "Go on!" said Inspector Eustace.

"Last night I got caught in the Red Rose, where I work, when the trouble came. I hid in the artists' dressing-room all night. Today I tried to get to—the same place you are all trying to get to." Her English was troubled by only the slightest of accents. She sounded like an American actress trying to sound like a Russian girl. It was rather nice.



Illustrated by HAMILTON GREENE

The man holding the flashlight dropped to the floor, an aborted yelp in his throat.

Smith-Haddon took it from there as if he had been cued.

"Well, here we are, and safe for the moment, at least. I have faith that our people will get through to us—my telephone call, you know. Just a matter of waiting—waiting and watching. One of us can keep watch at the shutter here. Clear view of the Bank of China building, which is where a rescue party would make for—according to my instructions, you know. So let's just relax and wait for them. When they come, we'll attract their attention with Inspector Eustace's flashlight, and—cheerio, we'll be safe before the Nips know what it's all about! Right, Inspector?"

"Righto, Mr. Smith-Haddon!"

The banker elected to take the first watch at the shutter. Eustace guided Mrs. Carstairs to a chair. The Russian girl found herself a stool, placed it against the wall, lit a cigarette and composed herself on her uncomfortable seat, her slim legs tucked under her. Sing Yat retired to the far end of the room, settled his frame in one of the heavy teak chairs, tucked his hands in his sleeves. Joe Black leaned against the door, staring morosely at the group.

"A regular League of Nations!" he muttered bitterly to himself.

MRS. CARSTAIRS would have called herself a "nice person." She was in the habit of expediently overlooking the moral connotations of the word "nice," dwelling more happily on her certainty that she was well-bred, cultured and possessed good taste.

She knew that there were chapters of her life that might be a little difficult to explain, but she firmly believed that virtually everyone's life held such chapters; and besides, *her* indiscretions had been *so* discreetly carried out.

Major Carstairs was no longer her husband. That is, they were separated, but not divorced. It was far more convenient that way. It made many of her activities—that might otherwise have been regarded as disreputable—quite respectable. And it kept Tom, and Archie—and all the Toms and Archies who had come before and would come afterward—from getting too intense.

And it wasn't quite true that she had come to Hongkew the day before on a quest for a faithful amah. Vera Carstairs was finding that, more and more, she needed a tonic these days. She got it from a Japanese store in Yangtzepoo—in small, white capsules.

Like so many women who are technically respectable and who sometimes wonder how well they are getting by under the scrutiny of inquisitive, gossipy friends, Mrs. Carstairs was very disdainful and intolerant of "bad women."

She was of the opinion they should be controlled, or proscribed, or deported, or something. In her book, Sonya Michkova was a "bad woman." In spite of the dangerous circumstance in which she found herself, she felt soiled and imposed upon that she had to share these quarters with such a creature.

JOE BLACK was a crook.

He didn't pick pockets, or hold up shopkeepers, or burgle safes and jewel boxes. Nevertheless, he was a crook. He liked to make an easy, fast dollar, and so much the better if there was a little zing to the process. Smuggling, hijacking other smugglers, crooked gambling, doing things with warehouse receipts—those were his vocations; anything that he thought was about ninety per cent safe and two hundred per cent profitable.

Back home he had been a small-time bookie and tinhorn gambler. Always frustrated by the minor nature of his activities and the meager extent of his profits, he had kept his eye on the main chance, his powder dry for the big opportunity when it should come along. One day he heard of a queer import company, a firm that brought in Russian vodka from Shanghai. But somehow they had never put their product on the market in any great quantities. Joe wondered how they got by, how they paid rent on their neat little warehouse in San Francisco's North Beach, how they kept up their unobtrusive little office in San Francisco's financial district, on the fringes of San Francisco's Chinatown.

One night Joe hijacked a couple of cases of the vodka. Quick on the uptake and smart at conjecture, he had the vodka analyzed. Two bottles out of every dozen were not merely vodka. They contained vodka plus a drug which sells illicitly and profitably in the United States. From there on out, everything was very clear to Joe Black. He didn't bother with the local henchmen. He bought himself a ticket to Shanghai. He got in touch with principals. Soon he was a recognized and well-documented member of the local underworld. The vodka racket eventually played out, but other things came along.

He was a selfish man, strictly for himself. Nobody had ever accused him of doing anything for anyone but himself. He would have been the first to admit this characteristic. He was suspicious of everyone else's intent, and thought that any person who would extend himself very far in the direction of gratuitous kindness for another was strictly a sucker.

Joe Black was interested only in Joe Black. . . .

Detective-Inspector Walter Eustace had been brought into the world in a gloomy Leeds village. His family had been meat-once-a-week poor. Their home was clean but cheerless, and Eustace had spent his boyhood firmly making up his mind that his maturity would have more warmth and substance and security. By the time that he had reached manhood, he realized that one from his station in life would never get any better off in England unless he brought himself favorably to the attention of Those Who Had. So he emigrated to the Far East, thinking to escape class distinction in what he supposed was "frontier life," and became a policeman.

In Shanghai he found himself more definitely caste-classified than he had been in England. He was a policeman, and to the *taipans* who lived in the big houses and got to their offices at noon, he was just a sort of trusted upper servant. Frustrated, Eustace took it out on the Orientals and the "wrong 'uns."

So the world, for Detective-Inspector Eustace, was made up of the "right people" and "wrong 'uns." And, of course, the Chinese. The "right people" possessed quietly adequate incomes, used correct grammar, wore acceptable clothes and spoke to policemen as though they were worthy but not-too-bright underlings, to be kept firmly in their places. Most everyone else were "wrong 'uns," or potential "wrong 'uns." They failed to pay debts, or departed in conduct from Eustace's rather narrow code of proper behavior, or dressed oddly and held their liquor badly, or worse. To Detective-Inspector Eustace, most Americans were "wrong 'uns."

Mr. Eustace was the worst kind of a snob—that is, a badly snubbed snob.

FREDERICK SMITH-HADDON was a *pukka sahib;* an old China hand, a *taipan.*

His father had been a Shanghailander, had been through the Taiping Rebellion, had wound up with several million dollars after the smoke cleared and the corpses were tossed into the Whangpoo. Frederick inherited his father's money, and his conceptions of what the white man in the Far East was entitled to.

In all his fifty-odd years in China he had never bothered to learn a half-dozen words in Chinese. He dealt with the natives through his comprador, who despised him, and robbed him often and pleasurably. He considered all Chinese either lazy, treacherous or perverse, or a combination of the three.

He looked down on most other types and varieties of people, too. He didn't care for the White Russians of Shanghai ("Always wanting something, the blighters!"), nor for Americans, who were all right in a business way but rather inclined to be bounders otherwise; and he was very hard on *all* people of the lower stations of life who sought to wriggle upward.

"Me, I just happened along. I am an entertainer."

On the other hand, despite Frederick Smith-Haddon's hyper-circumspection, his own coat-tails were not entirely immaculate: There was that little deal in Persian opium back in the twenties; a chance to make a few millions by putting up a few hundred thousand. And there was the White Russian girl, back in his salad days, who cut it short the veronal way when she heard that she was about to be deported back to Harbin.

But those things were all in the past, and the *taipan* was complacent in the belief that no one knew about them. He was kidding himself. Actually he wasn't a very intelligent man, at all.

In 1937, when the Japanese started to shoot it out with Chiang's crack German-trained divisions in Shanghai's backyard, he was one of the group of merchants and bankers who petitioned the Chinese government to "stop the resistance." He and his pals told the Nanking government that "counter-aggression would kill business and trade, and indefinitely postpone China's progress." Secretly he thought the Japanese were a smart people who would clean up China—for him and his fellow tycoons. It took him until 1941 to get wise to himself. Then it was too late.

THERE'S not much to Sing Yat-ming. He owned the Moon Palace. People who lived on the street had the idea he had always owned it. He was a shrewd man but not a grasping one. Like a fisherman who sets his weir where there are fish, and then sits quietly by to wait, Sing established himself close to the flow of money.

He cared not whence it came. He didn't worry about the fish that got away.

A lifetime in Shanghai had given him a pretty good understanding of the white man. He knew what lay behind the courtesy, the civility, the decorum and the splendid gab that passed between Chinese and foreigners. He knew what to expect of foreigners, and when to stop believing and trusting. Yet he never held rancor, never built up resentment. Life and a firm belief in the law of averages had made a philosopher of Sing Yat-ming. . . .

Sonya Michkova never had a decent break in her life. Her parents had been fugitives from the Bolsheviki. Vladivostok and poverty; Harbin and misery; Mukden and starvation; then Shanghai and death. Both of her parents died during their first winter in Shanghai. Badly battered by life and deprived of all of her illusions at a time when most girls her age are concerned with the color and pattern of their first party dresses, Sonya went to work in a cabaret.

There was plenty of competition, and the pickings for a thin, half-starved, introverted youngster like Sonya were slim. But she got by. She learned the "vun-more-bottle-of-vine-please" routine. She learned how to sing a few American and Continental songs. She got by.

The American Marines taught her English, and life taught her to expect nothing, and she'd never be disappointed. Her private life had been relatively immaculate. There had been sweethearts, but never more than one at a time, and a decent interval between them. But men who liked her looks were depressed by her bleak, fatalistic attitude toward life. One by one they smiled and lied, and went their way.

Sonya always had the feeling, in relation to the world, of being a ticketless passenger on a careening train. She constantly expected to be asked for her ticket, and then, unable to produce one, to be put off the train. There were no silver linings to her dark clouds, no pots of gold at the end of her rainbows. Not even rainbows.

It was past midnight.

Inspector Eustace watched at the shutter, a curtain of pale gray smoke drifting into the dim yellow flow of the oil lamp from his well-stoked pipe. Sonya sat asleep, her head against the wall, her mouth slightly open. Mrs. Carstairs conversed in low tones with Mr. Smith-Haddon, lighting cigarette after cigarette, crushing them out in an ornate ashtray marked *"Greetings from Asahi Brewery, Kobe, Japan."* Joe Black sat in the farther darkness with the Chinese, Sing Yat, neither of them speaking much.

The policeman reached toward them without taking his gaze from the aperture in the shutter, snapped his fingers twice. "Douse the light," he ordered, with the calmness of a man giving an order to a waiter. "We've got visitors—Nips, I think."

Black was at his side first, then the *taipan*. The others came too, and grouped themselves in an intent tableau.

"They're *ronins*," muttered the American. "Jap guerrillas. Hoodlums who help the Jap military. See their arm-bands!"

"What do we do now?" Smith-Haddon's voice was tense.

"Only one thing to do," replied Eustace. "Grab them if they come up here. Hope they don't get this far."

The three men stepped softly to the sides of the corridor door, arrayed themselves on either side. The others waited where they were.

It seemed interminable. They could hear the two men walking through the rooms below, talking to each other in rapid, staccato Japanese. Then there was silence. Then the sound of feet on the third-floor stair. A flashlight's rays reflected through the transom. Footsteps sounded outside in the corridor. The door opened.

As the flashlight's beam fell on the two women huddled together in the darkness, there was a quick exhalation of breath from the first intruder, and an exclamation from the other. Then came the hollow, wettish sound of a blackjack on a skull.

The man holding the flashlight dropped to the floor, an aborted yelp in his throat. Eustace leaped for the second man, but the Japanese was too quick for him. The *ronin* was clattering down the stairway while the policeman and the *taipan* were still trying to get past the inert body of his companion.

They heard the slam of the street door. That was that. Eustace—back at the shutter—watched the man hasten off down the dark, deserted street in the direction of the Japanese Landing Force barracks.

The relighted oil lamp shed its feeble rays once more, and revealed Joe Black and Sing busily trussing up the unlucky *ronin*. Smith-Haddon dropped wearily into a chair, began to rub his palms slowly together as if he were rolling something between them.

"Well, I guess we're in for it."

Inspector Eustace was silent.

That was answer enough for the rest. The Jap would come back with a patrol, and unless help came from the Settlement very shortly—they'd not need any help. Mrs. Carstairs began to sob convulsively. Sonya lit a cigarette with hands that were awkward and fingers that trembled. The *taipan* continued to rub his palms together. Strange, nervous sound effects. Then Joe Black spoke up.

"All the nice words

"Well, there ain't no good holding the funeral ahead of time. We can't fight, but there's no reason we can't run for it—over the roofs or in the streets. We could try to get to the river. Sing has a sampan stashed there—"

Smith-Haddon shook his head. "It's no use. We wouldn't stand a chance in the streets. Our only hope is that help will come from the Settlement. We must be *here* if they come. *If* they come." In the silence that followed, Mrs. Carstairs could be heard tremulously praying: *"Hail Mary, Mother*

of last night are in the discard. It's a break for the right people now, and the works for the others!"

of God, pray for us now and at the hour of our death. . . ."

The Russian girl crushed her cigarette out, then put her trembling hands to her face, as if to shut out reality. Was this, she asked herself, the last blow of fate? Was there, just as she had always feared, never to be any happiness? Just death with strangers, in a deserted hotel? Her hands were soon wet against her face.

Then she found a comforting arm around her. It was Mrs. Carstairs. Calm now, and quietly poised, she spoke reassuringly to the cabaret girl, saying kind and sensible things. Sonya found herself smiling at the other woman with real good will. The trembling ceased.

Eustace, puffing calmly on his pipe, found himself thinking about the American fellow, Joe Black. A useful fellow in a pinch. Neat, the way he tipped that Jap fellow over. The man had guts, a quick mind. Hadn't run out on them as he might have.

You never know about people, thought the Inspector. You think you've got a wrong 'un, and it turns out all the lad needs is a bit of understanding. Probably all that Black needed was a proper chance, and a little less dogging by the police. He certainly shaped up better in the emergency than had that blighter Smith-Haddon, who looked as if he was about to conk out. How men like that get all their power and money—

Vera Carstairs felt much better. She believed that they were lost, and she was resigned to it. Having someone to take care of and comfort brought a kind of dignity and happiness to what seemed her last few hours. She felt a sudden warmth for the forlorn girl by her side. She was probably no worse than other women of her own set. Than—this cost her an effort—herself. How heavily some women have to pay for their misdeeds, she thought sadly.

Sing Yat watched his guests with imperturbable detachment. What a fuss they made about the inevitable! Suppose it came tomorrow, or thirty years from tomorrow? Suppose it came here, or in their homes, or in a shiny foreign hospital—what matter? When it came, it came, and no amount of emotion could prevent it. It was all over in a minute. It was *how* one died that mattered, thought the Chinese, how one kept face and dignity at a time like this. This emotionalism, this— Pah!

Smith-Haddon was speaking; speaking slowly, thoughtfully.

"You know, my friends, it is at a time like this that one realizes—most graphically—the ways in which we ordinarily fall short—of being human beings. Here we are, six people, our destinies bound immutably together. We are interested in helping each other. We have come to realize that happiness is a condition that is shared, not a private circumstance that is owned. Why couldn't we have always had this understanding?" Mr. Smith-Haddon's voice was tremulous with emotion.

The two women listened with obvious agreement. Eustace nodded owlishly. Joe Black could hardly believe his ears. These people were human, after all, once you got underneath their hides. He forgot to be cynical. He listened with real interest and some reluctant sympathy.

Sing just smiled.

"For instance," continued the *taipan*, "here we are in Shanghai; poverty and wealth, luxury and destitution. We envy or despise each other between group and group, between caste and caste, between race and race. We are unwilling to consider the hardships the White Russians have gone through in China; we fail to help them to a place in the sun. The outcasts—we almost never give them anything but our backs. And our treatment of the Chinese"—he looked shamefacedly in the direction of Sing—"has been execrable. Right here in their own homeland—"

From the street there came the roar of motors—several of them. Black was first to spring to the shutter. He peered through, then tore it open and hoarsely shouted to those below. The cars, armored cars, stopped, their motors throbbing noisily.

"They're Limey Marines, dammit!" shouted the American. "Let's get the hell out of here!"

The little world of six people had been saved.

THE Customs Jetty was a scene of wild confusion.

The British were getting off the last of their people, lightering them to the tubby little Butterfield & Swire liner in midstream. The Bund teemed with Chinese refugees of all classes. Those in charge of the embarkation were harried and excited and noisy and ill-tempered about it all. There wasn't an overabundance of even deck space aboard the boat, and the embarkees were moving slowly, despite the emergency.

Smith-Haddon, with four suitcases and a hatbox, stood at the gangplank, giving last instructions to his worried comprador. Mrs. Carstairs, squired by a solicitous British Navy man, joined him.

"I understand you and Mrs. Carstairs had a fairly bad show yesterday, sir." The naval officer was very respectful. He knew how Smith-Haddon stood with the brass-hats.

"Yes, it was a bit sticky for a while, but we had it in hand at all times, Hadn't we better get aboard? Don't want to find ourselves left behind!"

THE Navy man responded to the salute of a subordinate. "Yes, Johnson?"

The man was embarrassed. "They's a lydy 'ere sir, with 'er suitcase and gear, and she says she was told to come aboard. Says Inspector Eustace of the Shanghai police said it would be okay, sir!"

"Well, why don't you bring her aboard, then!"

"Well, beggin' your pardon, sir, the regulations says only British and American nationals. She's a Roosian lydy. Name of Sonya Michkova. But if the Leftenant will okay it—"

"Oh, I see. That's rather different." He turned to the *taipan*. "You wouldn't know what the Inspector had in mind, sir, would you?"

Smith-Haddon looked sadly down his nose. "It's a pity that some must stay behind, but if you take one Russian, you must take the whole sixty thousand. Perhaps Eustace was carried away by his own good heart. I say, there he is now! Inspector! Come over here; there's a good fellow! We were just talking about that Russian woman, that Michkova woman."

Smith-Haddon cleared his throat, by way of punctuation. "Really, old fellow, we can't make an exception. Why, all those poor devils on the Bund up there would overrun us. You see what I mean, I'm sure."

The Inspector colored deeply. He couldn't for the life of him understand how or why he'd told the Russian girl to present herself for evacuation. He was a little afraid that the banker might get the wrong idea. "I quite understand, sir. Don't know how she got the idea that—"

"Quite, quite, Inspector. And then too, she probably isn't all that she should be, if you know what I mean."

Mrs. Carstairs laughed, liltingly, she hoped. "How you beat about the bush, Mr. Smith-Haddon! What you wanted to say is that she's a tramp, isn't it?" The Englishwoman was determined that her erstwhile companion-in-distress would have no opportunity to "exploit the situation."

The Detective-Inspector hurried over to the hesitant figure in the cheap, over-colorful dress. He was really very sorry about this. *Really!*

From where he stood on the deck of the lighter, Joe Black could see the two talking. Then he saw the girl pick up her bags and start up the ramp toward the Bund. He spat the cigarette from his mouth and pushed his way through the crowd toward the gangplank. On the jetty, just preparing to embark, he encountered Eustace, Smith-Haddon and Mrs. Carstairs.

"What gives with the Russky dame?"

Their faces were expressionless—well-bred people trying to cope with a possibly unpleasant incident, a "scene." Finally Eustace spoke:

"She is not a foreign national under the extraterritoriality agreement. You know the regulations. She cannot be evacuated."

"Oh, no? So we're back on the gold standard again, eh?"

They were silent.

"All the nice words and fancy malarky of last night are in the discard. It's a break for the right people now, and the works for the others! I went for your stuff, and she went for it. But old Sing Yat knew about your promises and offers. He took his chance with the sampan and his Chinee gods. The wise old coot! And you call yourselves—"

Eustace broke in with austerity. "That'll do, Black. And you'd better get aboard. With your record, you're rather lucky to be receiving transportation. It was very decent of Mr. Smith-Haddon to endorse you, without papers, as an American citizen."

"Decent? Brother, you kill me!" He jerked away from them, strode up the ramp after the Russian girl.

FROM the deck of the lighter they watched him join her, laughingly jerk his thumb back in the direction of the last boat to leave Shanghai, then offer her a smoke.

They saw him cup the match for her cigarette, light his own on hers, and then pick up her bags. As the lighter pulled away from the dock, the three at the rail peered intently at the couple ashore, the two outcasts. They saw them walk with apparent unconcern into the teeming throng of Chinese on the waterfront street; then they saw them no more. Oddly enough for her. Mrs. Carstairs could not think of anything clever to say.

They all felt rather uncomfortable—for a few brief moments. Then they dismissed the entire incident from their memories.

CRADLE OF THE DEEP

A story of the rare sea-otter—almost exterminated by the Russians, but now coming back.

by

KENNETH GILBERT

THE kelp-bed was a mile off the Washington coast, and at this early hour the sun had not yet lifted the thin fog which had settled during the night. The mass of brown tendrils, interlocked so tightly that even the severest winter storms could not tear loose the ropy stems with their bulbous roots, undulated gently now in the eternal ground-swell of the Pacific, and yet there was no wind, and the springtime sea was molten as far as the eye could reach. There seemed to be no life out there, but the old-man gull who came by on set wings, looking for a dead herring or perchance a weed-trapped shellfish, yelped irritably at something that he saw in the kelp-bed.

The young sea-otter female, the hour of her travail ended, lay on the kelp with her first-born baby clasped in her short arms with the monkeylike paws, her mild dark eyes luminous with mother-love. Elsewhere in the wide gray sea was her big mate, her overlord for life; but in this ecstatic moment he was apparently forgotten. For the moment, too, the nearness of possible enemies was forgotten—the wild, tide-gnawed shore, from which came the bitter taint of woodsmoke which at the same time was so vague in the unstirred air that it could scarcely be detected by any other creature save a sea-otter.

But there was a small cluster of Indian shacks standing beyond the wind-dwarfed trees which fringed the top of the high banks, and on the beach were several dugout canoes pulled above high-tide mark, for the kelp-bed was a favorite spot to "jig" for rock-cod. At the moment none of the villagers suspected that a sea-otter had returned to the ancient whelping-grounds where three generations ago they were numerous; and none of the

She snarled defiance when the gulls seemed to be threatening her pup.

rare sea-creatures had ever been seen save by the oldest tribesmen.

But instinct had made the young otter-mother cautious, for every few moments she left off fondling her baby to raise her doggish head, set on a long, tapering neck, to search with telescopic eyes in all directions beneath the low-hanging mist, while her nostrils flared and contracted as they winnowed secrets from the sluggish air-currents. Yet the mysterious delights of new motherhood that she was savoring always calmed her fears, and she again devoted attention to her little one.

She was a sleek-bodied creature perhaps three and a half feet in length, with a spadelike tail; her hind feet were long and webbed, but her front paws were more like small and cunning hands. The glistening sheen of her pelt was like frosted silver—dark beneath but with long guard-hairs tipped with white, and her head and neck were even lighter in hue—a rich and deep cloak of the most prized fur on earth, sought after by men of whom many have paid with their lives. As though aware of its lustrous beauty, she was often accustomed to spending long moments of female vanity preening herself and combing the fur with her foreclaws. But now her attention was wrapped up solely in the glory of the miraculous thing which had occurred to her. The pup, a replica of her save in size, snuggled contentedly in the depth of her warm fur, and dozed, full-fed at last.

Reminded that it had been a long while since she had eaten, she cached her still-sleeping baby on the kelp and slid smoothly into the blue-green depths. More than two minutes passed before she reappeared, breaking water in characteristic otter-fashion without causing a ripple. Clutched in each small paw was a spiny sea-urchin. Without effort she shot out of the water and onto the kelp.

There she did an odd and unusual thing. Holding the two sea-urchins a foot or so apart, she brought them together smartly several times so that their protective shells were cracked. Then, holding one and then the other to her lips, she literally drank the soft meat from inside. She tossed the shells aside and turned to her baby.

The sharp, clicking sound as she smashed the sea-urchins awoke him, and he stirred and lifted his tiny head, mewling plaintively. Instantly she was beside him, nose exploring him for possible harm, but quickly she decided that nothing was wrong. She drew him to her and offered him nourishment, which he accepted greedily. Then she closed her eyes briefly for one of the interminable catnaps which, for her, passed as sound slumber.

The sun climbed above the rugged hills to the eastward and pulled up the night-fog so that visibility increased to several miles. The sea-otter came awake and saw a steamer's smoke on the horizon, but apparently decided it was too far away to mean harm to her or her baby. A light breeze skittered over the heaving surface of the sea, and by and by there came a flock of herring-gulls from shore, no doubt having been told by the old-man gull that there were strange visitors on the kelp-bed. They swooped and wheeled low above the mother-otter and her youngster, studying the pair with brittle-hard, curious eyes. Although the gulls were voyagers who sometimes traveled far, it is probable that they had never seen her kind before, and they may have decided that she was an unusual sort of seal. But she was a trespasser upon their hunting-grounds, and they dived at her, screaming insults, while she wrinkled her lips and snarled defiance when they seemed to be threatening her pup. Hunger made them tire of the sport quickly, and with final jeers they moved off in search of food.

The day grew warmer and the baby otter appeared to gain strength rapidly although he was still but a few hours old. He was about the size of a half-grown rabbit and not for several days would he acquire the gift of sight, yet there was sturdiness in his plump body. To the young mother he was like a delightful toy, and the playfulness of her nature which is the heritage of all otters came uppermost. She

rolled over on her back, seized a loose bulb of kelp and tossed it in the air like a ball, always catching it expertly. Apparently she was trying to amuse him and get him into the spirit of play, as though she were unaware of his puppy-blindness. She even picked him up with her forepaws and tossed him lightly, but stopped when he made a reedy cry of complaint. Thereafter she nuzzled him, cuddled him in her arms and made chirruping sounds which she may have intended as a sort of lullaby. But abruptly her ecstatic spell was broken as her keen ears, set low on her skull, picked up a slight sound originating a mile away—the scrape of a dugout canoe being dragged over the gravelly beach to the water.

She raised her head for a quick look and saw human beings moving on the shore, as the Indian squaws prepared to set out to the kelp-bed for a mess of fish, and in one swift motion she gripped her baby firmly and slid into the safety of the sea.

She swam easily on her back, holding the pup free of the water to which he had yet to be accustomed, and the slight ripple she made was scarcely discernible among the breeze-ruffled swells. For a half-mile seaward she went before she stopped, then raised herself half-out of the water to stare at the squaws moving toward the kelp-bed. She waited there, rising and falling with the waves, apparently certain that she had not been seen.

For the moment she was safe from her enemies; but never would she be free of fear so long as the pup swam with her, and he would not attain full maturity until he was four to five years old. On shore and in the wide sweep of the great sea there existed foes who were grimly determined to destroy her pup, and if he survived and finally attained the craft and shrewdness which make his kind the wariest of all creatures, it would be due to the loving protection she would give him every minute until he was able to fend for himself.

For hours she waited out there in the sea while the Indians fished, with no chance to appease her hunger because she constantly kept the pup above water by lying on her back and holding him in her arms. He fed intermittently and drowsed much, apparently contented in his cradle of the deep. It was mid-afternoon before the squaws finished with their fishing and the sea-otter was enabled to return to the kelp.

She placed him where he would be safe, and at once dived to the bottom, returning soon with a couple of horse-clams which she smashed together until their shells were broken and she could get at the white meat inside. The shells were tossed on the kelp where they were presently spied by a wandering gull who swung past, deftly picked up a shell but dropped it at once when he discovered that its interior was empty. He shrieked that he had been robbed, and flew away to tell his friends. But they did not come near the kelp-bed again, apparently accepting philosophically the presence of the strange, seal-like creature frequenting it.

Still spring-like weather held, and the sea-otter and her pup thrived. He grew rapidly, and when his eyes opened after the ninth day she taught him the art of swimming. He, too, showed the playfulness of the otter nature and they spent many pleasant moments at mad games of pursuit in and out of the water. All the while the mother-otter apparently intensified her watchfulness, as though aware that the odds against life were running out on the pup and that the enemies who had spared him so far were about to exact their tribute. . . .

The Indians came and went to the kelp-beds and she and the pup avoided them. But there were other foes in the sea, and when the pup was three weeks old the chances against his further existence seemed to become overwhelming.

That day was warm and sunny, and all morning the pair sported in the clear sea-water. Already the pup's inner coat of fur which protected him against the chill of the ocean had thickened until the immature guard-hairs made him appear like a fuzzy ball. His tiny hind feet, webbed until they appeared like the flippers of a seal, could drive him through the water at darting speed, and his mother taught him the art of twisting and turning in mock pursuit of prey. Sometimes now she overtook and caught a fish, usually a kelp-cod, although once she brought a shimmering salmon-trout to the kelp-bed.

The fish interested the pup mightily, but his mother's growl warned him that such food was not to be attempted until he was older. She took a few bites out of the juiciest and most succulent part of the fish, which lay just back of the head, then left the remainder for the gulls. The pup sniffed at the prize with vast interest but made no effort to eat it, being well-satisfied with the nourishment which his mother provided.

It was on one of the pair's dive toward the bottom of the comparatively shallow reef which held the kelp-bed that the pup, in following the abrupt, twisting turns of his mother whose fur caught and held air-cells until she seemed like a shining mass of fluid silver, caught unmistakable warning from her. The pup saw her veer aside and shoot for the surface, and he obediently sought to follow. At that moment he saw the dark shape of the shark which haunted the kelp-bed on the chance of picking up a stray rock-cod or maybe a flounder. The shark, himself only half-grown, for he would attain a length of more than thirty feet at maturity, saw the gleaming, air-bubbled shape of the pup and apparently decided that it was some odd sort of fish which would prove a tempting morsel in its capacious maw. With a swerve of its fifteen-foot body the shark opened its mouth, exposing the multiple rows of saw-edged teeth. But in the act of its v-shaped jaw closing upon the body of the pup, the shark got a sudden, sharp distraction.

Knife-like fangs pierced its sand-paper hide just behind the gills. The pang of the wound was so agonizing that the shark turned with astonishing swiftness and snapped at its tormentor. But the mother-otter, with an incredible reverse-turn, was gone, just ahead of the razor-set jaws, and the pup was likewise fleeing for the surface and the safety of the kelp-bed. Both of them shot out of the water and onto the kelp, to turn and whine defiance at the unfriendly depths behind them. They saw the shark almost break water, then turn and sound, a trail of water-thinned blood followed him.

Despite the narrowness of the escape for each, the concern of the mother was entirely for her pup. Anxiously she explored him with her questing nose, but was satisfied presently when she failed to discover any wound on his soft and tender body. In comfort she offered him nourishment, but before he was full-fed she tensed with new alarm.

The weather had changed. After those long days of halcyon peace on the western ocean, a brewing storm in the southwest had thrust its fingers of dank fog along the coast, bringing the first skittering puffs of winds that would ultimately turn into a strong blow and make the kelp-bed almost untenable. Great breakers would thunder along the shore, and the kelp-bed would be tossed and twisted until many of its bottom-clinging tentacles would be torn loose. No living thing could endure long in its semi-security.

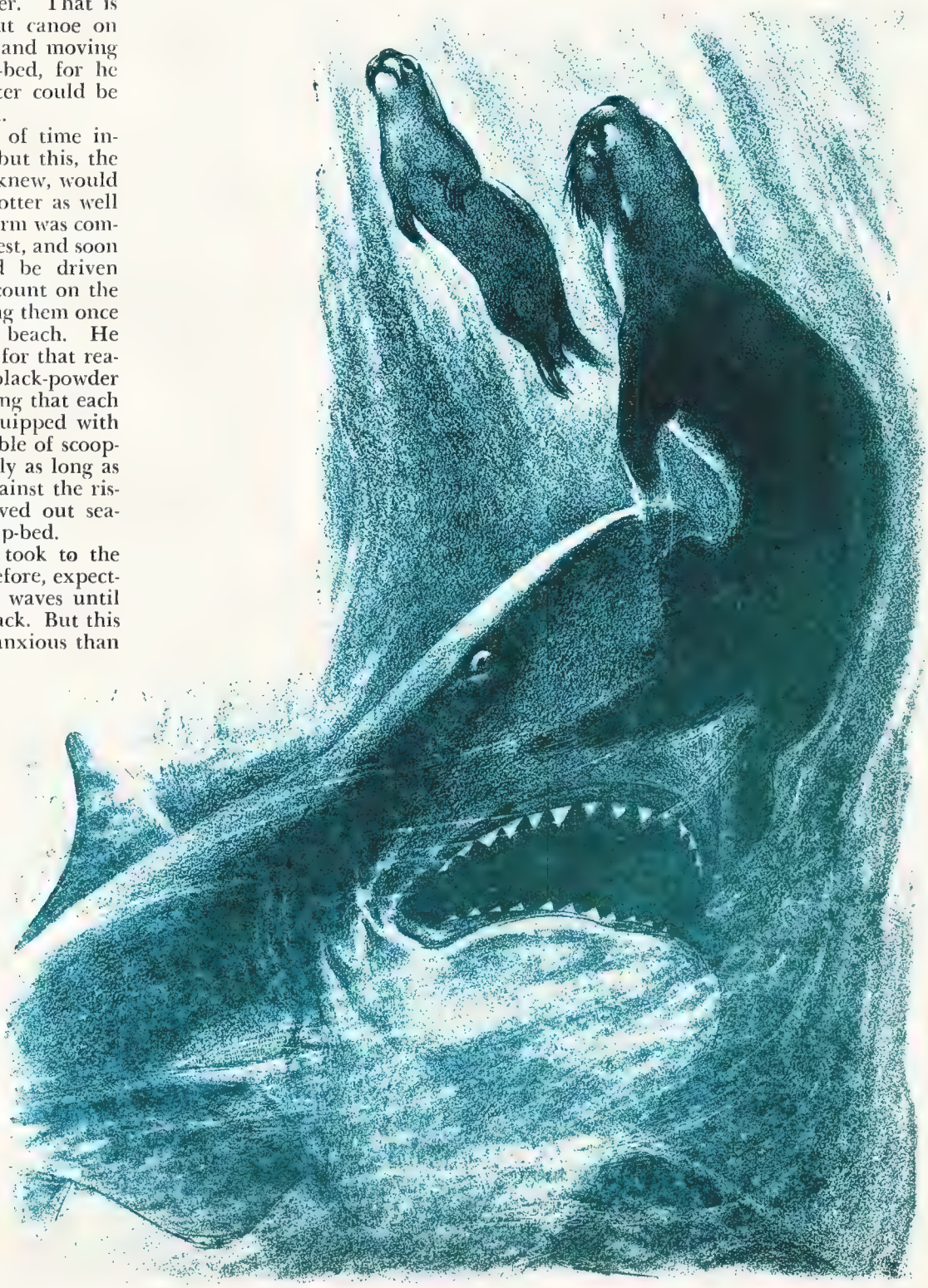
Yet it was not the approaching blow which had stirred the young otter-mother with apprehension. Her fear was aroused by the discovery that a dozen dugout canoes had come out from shore and were spreading out in the vicinity of the kelp-bed. The Indians were well aware of the approaching storm, but the eldest of them, a veteran seal-hunter, had observed the antics of the otter-mother and her pup. The white man's law said that all sea-otters were protected and not to be harmed, but the old hunter had long had a contempt for such rulings.

It had been many years since he had felt the warmth of a sea-otter's pelt on his couch. There was also the possibility of a black marketeer in furs taking such a pelt off his hands at an exorbitant price. It was likewise probable that a sea-otter and her pup, captured alive, would bring a fancy price from some wealth-backed zoo. The legal aspects of such a transaction could be handled under the guise of scientific interest and study. The least profitable angles of the situation meant a prized sea-otter pelt to warm the couch of Charley Mowitch during the bitter nights of winter. That is why he had every dugout canoe on the beach into the water and moving fanwise toward the kelp-bed, for he alone knew how a sea-otter could be captured or at least killed.

There was an element of time involved in the operation, but this, the wrinkled old seal-hunter knew, would work against the mother-otter as well as his canoemen. The storm was coming fast out of the southwest, and soon she and her pup would be driven ashore. But he did not count on the remote chance of capturing them once they were forced on the beach. He had a deadlier plan, and for that reason he took along his old black-powder .38-55 rifle, as well as seeing that each canoe in the fleet was equipped with a wide-mouthed net capable of scooping up a king salmon fully as long as the mother sea-otter. Against the rising wind the canoes moved out seaward to surround the kelp-bed.

The mother and pup took to the water as they had done before, expecting to remain out in the waves until the Indians had turned back. But this time she appeared more anxious than usual, for she was weather-wise and realized that a real gale was coming from the southwest. Other sea-creatures possibly had the same awareness. A wolf-pack of three orcas, or killer-whales, showed at intervals against the seaward horizon as they headed northward for a sheltered cove where, possibly, they might find hunting. Small whales sometimes took refuge in the same cove during a severe storm. The sea-otter had no desire to attract the attention of the orcas by getting too close, and yet she would remain as far as possible from the advancing canoes of the Indians. Beside her the pup swam easily, riding the crest of the growing chop and holding his breath as waves broke with creamy froth over him. So long as he could obtain air at regular intervals he could travel thus for a long while despite the fact that his muscles were young and untoughened.

Just ahead there was an explosive sound, and a column of water shot into the air. The sea-otter stopped



The mother-otter, with an incredible reverse-turn, was gone, just ahead of the razor-set jaws.

swimming and raised for a look. Twenty feet away from her a dark body rolled half-out of the sea, then sank. Beyond it were a dozen other similar shapes, and the sea-otter, suddenly aware that she was in the path of a school of blackfish, turned abruptly and started back toward the kelp-bed, the pup trailing her obediently. The blackfish—small whales up to thirty feet in length—were probably harmless so far as she was concerned, even if they could have overtaken her. Their natural prey was fish, but they might easily have concluded that the pup was some species of salmon. Signaling grave danger, she led him away from the danger-spot, nor did she stop again until she heard the scrape of paddles on the wooden gunwales of the dugouts. The Indians were close! Instinctively she dived, and the pup followed her.

TWENTY feet under the surface they swam together, in a blue-green world that was silent and undisturbed by wind and wave, although they could feel a gentle undulation that came down from the rollers above. Unwilling to go seaward farther and risk having her pup pursued by the black-fish, her strategy now was to pass beneath the canoes and possibly regain the security of the kelp-bed behind them. The shapes of the Indian craft cast momentary shadows above, but still she kept on, while the pup swam beside her as though secured to her body with an invisible string.

Suddenly she was aware that the pup was leaving her, that he was slanting toward the surface, and she understood that he had all but exhausted the air in his tiny lungs. He needed to breathe. She turned and shot upward with him, seeking only a quick gulp of oxygen before diving again, for she realized that the canoes now were all around.

They broke water together, and a wave lifted them until they were looking down on the canoes spread out in a circle perhaps a hundred yards in diameter enclosing the otter pair. Even the pup sensed that these were enemies, and he dived as quickly as she did. Again they remained a long while submerged. But when they were once more forced to the surface for a fresh breath, they discovered that the canoes still ringed them. Old Charley Mowitch, who had thus killed sea-otter when he was a boy permitted to go along with experienced hunters, seemed to anticipate the direction the otters were taking underwater, and thus each time the weakening pair surfaced, he managed to have his canoes close at hand, drawing closer and closer to the victims. His rifle was beside him on the thwart, and several times he could have slain the mother with a bullet, but he was certain now that the pair could be captured alive, entangled in the wide-mouthed hoops of net which would be thrown over them when near enough.

Panicky now, the mother had apparently given up all thought of escaping to the kelp-bed, and although she feared the blackfish which she knew were rolling their slow way toward more sheltered waters, she feared the Indians more. She knew that the pup was losing strength in this terrific trial, but she would not desert him even though she might have escaped and saved her own life. He surfaced more often and sought to remain there drawing breath into his tortured lungs despite the fact that the ring of canoes narrowed and the whooping Indians drew closer. Literally she forced him under by throwing her body over his. But soon he would rise again, and the thing had to be repeated.

Once she came up and stared around at her foes with her round, fear-filled eyes seeming to plead. Likewise the pup, thrusting his button-like nose out of the water and shaking his head pathetically, whimpered in infantile protest against the cruelty of the thing. But a moment later she had forced him under again, as though determined to drown him rather than permit the yelling persecutors to take him alive. For the last time they dived, and when they were compelled to start at last for the surface the pup moved so sluggishly that she seemed to understand the end was very near.

SOMETHING huge and black all but thrust them aside. A great body arched, and a flat tail slapped at her. They were in the midst of the cruising school of blackfish. Behind the leader, a big bull, were other dark shapes.

The pup apparently saw the blackfish too, and terror gave him new strength. He veered out of their path with a final thrust of his small body. But a string of air-bubbles that came from his nostrils trailed him like a wisp of smoke as he slanted for the surface, the anxious mother close behind.

No longer would she attempt to escape. In her final surge of mother-love she would face whatever horrible outcome the next moment held. Loyal to the last, it was plain that if her pup died she had no further wish to live. She came up beside him and lifted her head in challenging defiance of the enemies whom she knew were waiting.

But what she saw was a scene of terrifying confusion. In their eagerness to run down the sea-otters, the Indians had overlooked the blackfish, or else had not seen them until the school broke water among the cluster of canoes. The little whales themselves meant no danger to the canoemen, unless they might blunderingly upset some of the tricky craft. What the Indians did fear was something else.

Old Charley Mowitch was the first to spy the new danger and to yell warning. The orcas, whose specialty is killing whales even as big and formidable as giant cachalots, had discovered the blackfish and had turned back from their quest for the sheltered cove. Rough weather meant nothing to the orcas if a kill was in prospect. Charley Mowitch saw three sharklike dorsal fins splitting the waves, and he glimpsed the splotched, mottled underbodies of the killers as they rolled in the swells, the wide-gaping mouths studded with strong teeth. His canoemen saw the same spectacle and, without waiting for the order, they swung their frail craft and paddled as though the devil himself had suddenly risen from the sea.

But the blackfish were likewise aware of the nearness of their foes, and abruptly their leisurely progress was changed into frantic flight; but the killers were faster, and the blackfish probably knew it, for the latter drove on a great slant toward the bottom, where the orcas preferred not to follow. Slowly the orcas moved on, content to wait until their intended victims should reappear. In this fashion they had killed many bigger whales in their time, satisfied only with tearing out the tongues of their prey and touching no other part of the flesh. Of a sudden the mother-otter and her baby, lying on the surface and drinking in deep gulps of life-giving air, realized that enemies no longer harassed them.

Charley Mowitch and his Indians would remain on shore until the storm blew itself out. The blackfish were gone and so were the killer-whales. It must have seemed good to be alone and unthreatened with her pup once more, for the mother's eyes glowed with an affection which could pass all understanding as she nuzzled her baby and mutely reassured him that danger was gone.

AS long as the storm lasted the kelp-bed offered no security or shelter. Perhaps the mother sensed that never would it be safe for herself or her baby again. Perhaps, too, she was reminded of a kindlier spot in the wild north where enemies were fewer and where her big mate awaited the return of herself and her first-born, and where, during the pleasant summer ahead, they could live out their lives as nature had intended. The journey was long and would be fraught with many dangers, yet somehow they would make it.

That is why, with strength regained at last, they presently steered northward, shoulder to shoulder, with the rising sea urging them on.

MODERN WAR IS A BATTLE OF SPECIALISTS. HERE ARE SOME MEMORABLE ANECDOTES OF A VERY SPECIAL AND INTERESTING JOB IN WORLD WAR II

The Photo

Illustrated by O. F. SCHMIDT

SMALL arms and machine guns crackled and spat viciously, tracing criss-cross lines of fire over the sloping fields and through the woodland of the hills northeast of Troyes sûr Seine; mortars belched hollow staccato coughs followed by the crunching crash of exploding shells; BARs barked rhythmically, and sub-machine guns burped in spasmodic bursts.

I Company was in trouble.

In the mad dash across France pursuing the retreating Wehrmacht, the company suddenly found itself too far advanced and practically surrounded by stubbornly fighting Nazi Waffen S.S. troops only too glad to get in a lick of their own. All escape routes seemed to be commanded by heavy German fire, and even as the CO radioed back his position and predicament he knew that help could not reach him in time.

But far to the rear, in a strangely equipped truck, sat one man who could and would save the sorely pressed company. His name was Otto Astolli and he was a PI—a Photo Interpreter. Company I was destined to be greatly in his debt.

Otto was a graduate of MITC Camp Ritchie in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Maryland, one of many Photo Intelligence Schools maintained for the training of PIs both by the Army and the Navy. Here—under the expert guidance of the Chief of Training, Colonel Shipley Thomas, officers and men for IPW, MII, OB, CIC, and PI duties received their special education.

The PI-to-be—already an expert in one or more fields such as military installations and equipment, industrial plants, railroad centers, vegetation, geological formations, radio, engineering, and many other types of information pertaining to the enemy—would here become familiar with the different kinds of aërial photographs to be interpreted: high and low altitude photos; verticals and obliques, depending on the optical axis of the camera at the time of exposure; composites, taken with a multi-lens camera and consisting of a vertical photo surrounded by four transformed obliques; controlled and uncontrolled mosaics, a series of overlapping verticals; and pinpoints, strips, and photomaps.

He would learn photographic laboratory techniques and he would be taught to decipher and use the marginal information appearing on each photo showing negative serial number, time and place of exposure, altitude, camera focal length, and deviation from the vertical—but most important of all he would practise *stereo-vision*.

Using a highly accurate stereoscopic device, the PI views a pair of overlapping verticals called a stereo-pair. Objects that appear flat on each single photo stand out in sharp, magnified, *three-dimensional* detail. As the PI knows the scale of the vertical photo, based on the altitude at which it was taken and the focal length of the camera, the exact heights of objects on the ground can be measured with astonishing accuracy. The steepness of hills and whether equipment can negotiate them, camouflaged buildings, relative sight lines, and many other secrets of the single picture are revealed through stereo-vision.

Upon graduation the PIs are assigned to a PI team consisting of one captain and three NCOs with a PI truck as organic transportation. This 2½-ton vehicle is in effect a rolling photographic laboratory fully equipped to develop, print, and interpret aërial photos with blacked-out dark room, electric lights, running water, and stereoscopic instruments.

It was in such a truck that Otto first learned of the plight of I Company.

A special reconnaissance mission was flown securing aërial photos of the trapped infantry company's position and the surrounding countryside with the deployment of the enemy forces. And Otto went to work.

Stereo-pair after stereo-pair passed under his scope. Carefully the positions of I Company and those of the S.S. troops were noted and marked. The exact heights and slopes of hills and dales, trees and buildings were measured. Projected sightlines were calculated, and finally a series of map coördinates were radioed out to the beleaguered infantry company. And while artillery harassed the enemy, I Company flew the trap. From his PI truck far to the rear Otto had accurately determined a route of defilade area through which the troops could escape unobserved by the enemy!

PHOTO INTELLIGENCE has become the most widely employed source of information in military conflict and is officially credited with obtaining 90% of our military intelligence in World War II. No important defensive or offensive action is undertaken on land, sea, or in the air without the trail first being blazed by PIs. These PIs constitute in effect a corps of exceptionally efficient secret agents who cover infinitely greater areas of any enemy territory than was ever possible before.

Interpreters

by
Ib MELCHIOR

It was as pretty a bracketing of a couple of moving targets as I've ever seen.

The first aërial photograph for military intelligence purposes was snapped in 1861 by the U. S. Army Balloon Corps. The camera was installed in a special kite. A plane was used for the first time by Wilbur Wright in 1909, and World War I saw the beginning of Photo Intelligence when hand-held cameras were employed to take pictures of enemy installations as a by-product of the observation squadron. And soon photo interpreting made Mata Hari obsolete when famous "Big Bertha," the gigantic German gun which during the summer of 1918 was lobbing shells into Paris 90 miles away, was located by PI.

The general area where the gun was concealed had been deduced by calculating the trajectory of the projectiles, but reconnaissance planes could spot no signs of activity in that area, and the gun's exact location remained a mystery. Finally a PI examining aërial photos of the area discovered a line of footprints leading across a newly plowed field and disappearing into a dense patch of wood. Comparing photos taken at various times, he calculated the time when these footprints were made. Knowing Big Bertha's firing schedule and the general activity in the area, he concluded that the footprints led to Big Bertha's hiding-place. He was right!

When World War II struck, the U.S. armed forces were ready with complete wings of the Air Force devoted to aërial photography, with mapping units, bomb recording, and last but not least the Photo Interpreters.

Otto Astolli's first PI assignment after graduation was in London where he interpreted photos of Hitler's Channel Coast Fortifications for the pre-invasion aërial bombardment, and collected information about the installations for the invasion commanders. It was here the PIs worked out an ingenious three-step ruse to trick the Nazis into revealing their hidden gun emplacements.

On the appointed hour three reconnaissance planes flew over the Nazi positions a few minutes apart. When they returned the photos they had taken were rushed to the PIs, and shortly the location of targets were disseminated to interested agencies.

This is how it worked. When the first plane approached the German positions an alert was sounded by the Nazis. The photos taken by this plane showed gun crews and other personnel streaming out of their barracks to man their guns. No matter how well they were hidden the living-quarters were thus given away.

The second plane brought back photos showing the direction in which the soldiers proceeded and the number of men in each crew. And the pictures from the third plane revealed the exact spot where the troops disappeared into the camouflaged installations. In this way the Germans were duped into giving away their well-concealed batteries, AA installations, and other fortifications.

The much vaunted German efficiency, thoroughness, and precision were of great help to Otto in his PI work on the West Wall. Finding two or three gun emplacements was enough to reconstruct the entire installation because the exact Germans always built these positions according to regulation pattern. By the size of the personnel barracks housing the crew for a West Wall heavy gun the caliber of this gun could be determined. And by tracing the shadows cast by barbed-wire patterns, hidden MG positions could be spotted.

This may seem an almost incredible amount of information to be gained by interpreting an aërial photo, but consider these facts.

On Kiska, one of the Aleutian Islands, PIs not only spotted all artillery pieces accurately, but the caliber of each gun was determined—with only one error.

On a small South Pacific island the Jap troops were estimated as four thousand strong by the PIs. But capture of the island disclosed their error. The exact count was 3967. . . .

It was while Otto was in London—in 1943—that one of the great PI stories of the war broke.

Around the tip of the Binnen-Alster, a body of water in the heart of Hamburg, several choice military targets were located, including an all-important railroad center and a couple

of vital industrial plants. These installations had for months been the targets for heavy bombing raids, but apparently to absolutely no avail. Strike photos showed heavy damage to the bombed area, but strangely, the efficiency of the targets were not affected in the least.

For months this was a puzzle to everyone until one day the riddle was solved by an alert PI officer—and a horse.

As this officer was examining the strike photos of the previous day's raids he became aware of a feeling of familiarity. About six hundred yards from the tip of Binnen-Alster a causeway spanned the water. On this causeway was a lone, horsedrawn cart.

And looking at this cart the PI suddenly yelled:

"I've got it!"

Rushing to the files he dug out strike photos of the Binnen-Alster area from weeks back—and in all of them the lone, horsedrawn cart was on the causeway!

It was easy to dope it out then. While the real targets had been painstakingly camouflaged, the Germans had built a fake causeway six hundred yards farther down the water. In their zeal for perfection the horse-drawn cart had been included. With the most careful attention to detail a decoy canvas city had been constructed on rafts over the water between the real causeway and the Binnen-Alster tip. This is what we had been bombing.

The strike photos following this discovery had a different story to tell.

This was Photo Intelligence at its strategic best. Later in the war I was privileged to witness the climax of a nice job of tactical intelligence.

It was during the Battle of the Bulge. I was then with the Counter Intelligence Corps of XII Corps, spearhead of Patton's Third Army. During four days and five nights in December 1944 XII Corps had moved eighty thousand men and eleven thousand vehicles from the Saar region in France to Luxembourg and halted the breakthrough north of Luxembourg City. By year's end Corps' mission of seizing and holding the Saur-Moselle line had been accomplished. With the Germans on one side of the river and we on the other the lines became static.

Early in January 1945 the troops in and around the town of Remich on the Moselle in Southern Luxembourg in the sector held by the 2nd Cavalry Group began to be harassed by two 88-mm self-propelled guns throwing shells at them every night. It proved impossible to locate and destroy them. That is until PI got into the act.

The PI team with the Forward Echelon of XII Corps, G-2, was PI Team 22, commanded by Capt. Bourne.

Aërial photos of the terrain opposite the 2nd Cavalry Group sector were carefully studied and tracks made by the 88-mm SP guns were discovered all over the place. But wherever they went they'd always disappear into a small wooded patch directly opposite Remich. This would be where the SP guns hid out during the daytime.

Orders went out to the 255th FA Bn to destroy the two 88s, and I went down to the arty observation point in the attic of a villa on the Remich waterfront to see the fireworks.

An arty lieutenant was calling the shots. First a few rounds of phosphorus shells *karrummped* into the trees, the white clouds mushroomed up among the naked branches—and in no time the two SP guns came tearing out—hell bent for election.

And now followed as pretty a bracketing of a couple of moving targets as I've ever seen. The lieutenant barked orders and directions—shell after shell screamed overhead, and before long the SP guns were reduced to smoking scrap. Through my binoculars I could see wounded Nazi crew members struggle away from their mangled guns to safety—that is, those who did not hang lifeless over the tangled iron rubble. . . .

Photo Intelligence can be divided into three main functions. The first one is reconnaissance; to learn vital facts, both strategic and tactical, about enemy territory, positions, strength, installations, and activity.

The second one is mapping.

Gen. Omar Bradley once said: "The nation with the best maps will win the war."

At the time of Pearl Harbor the U.S. had only one fifth of the land area of the world mapped in enough detail to make the small-scale maps necessary to guide bombing squadrons, task forces, and armies into enemy territory.

Perhaps the most impressive mapping mission of the war was flown by the Navy on July 5, 1943 just before the historic Battle of Kula Gulf.

Early one morning a reconnaissance plane reported to Admiral Ainsworth —on board the Flagship *Honolulu*— commanding Cru Div 9 that a Japanese reinforcement convoy, "The Tokyo Express," was approaching from Bougainville.

As the task force in that region had no reliable or detailed charts of the Kula Gulf area, the commander assigned a photo-plane mission to photograph the entire area that same morning. The films were developed, prints made and assembled into a controlled mosaic showing islands, shorelines, shoals and reefs, and the completed photo-chart was delivered to the Admiral by three o'clock in the afternoon.

From this chart a safe course was laid through perilous, reef-ridden waters *via* Indispensable Strait and past Visuvisu Point on New Georgia. Our fleet sped safely through to surprise the Japs in the Battle of Kula Gulf, fought that same night.

The third function of PI is the recording of the results of action such as bombing raids and artillery bombardment, and accurately assess the damage inflicted upon the targets.

Many camouflage subterfuges were invented in order to mislead the bomb-damage assessment missions.

During the war, for instance, tanks and trucks quickly constructed of canvas and lumber served to make up losses suffered by armored units in an air raid, so the bombed unit would still seem to be full strength to the PI studying his stereo-pair, and the unit's striking power would be overestimated. Although this way size, shape, and shadow would be correct the discerning PI could still detect this clever ruse by comparing the rela-

tive tone of the real and the fake tanks, for iron and canvas reflect light differently.

And only a couple of months ago in Munich, Bavaria I saw several big, undamaged buildings still standing among the devastated structures in the ravaged city. These buildings were carefully painted to look exactly like burned-out houses long since useless, yet there is hardly a scratch on them.

The first phase of a PI mission is of course taking the photos, not an easy task.

Raids and battles do not wait for perfect light conditions, nor are they carried out according to the convenience of the photographer. The photo plane must fly in all sorts of weather, through fog and smoke, in temperatures as freezing as 50 below zero, and at any hour of the day or night, sometimes with a speed of 400 MPH—dodging fighter planes and flak while taking the desired pictures.

Most photos are transmitted to a stationary or mobile photo-lab on the ground for quick developing, printing, and interpretation. But on special missions immediate results are essential, and the troop commander must have up-to-the-minute intelligence. On such flights the plane is literally a "flying photo-lab." The pictures are taken and processed at once. The plane carries a PI who without loss of precious time can interpret the photos, and detailed information can be radioed back making instant action possible.

Night photo reconnaissance is often successful when nothing can be learned by day. The enemy has a tendency to be less cautious and thorough in his camouflage when he believes himself shielded by darkness.

For this purpose the photo plane carried "flash bombs" set to explode at predetermined altitudes and capable of bathing many square miles of land or sea in day-brilliant light. The camera shutters were set to trip automatically at the peak intensity of the flash. But most often missions flying at night—or in foggy weather—used infra-red photos.

In October 1942 during the early stages of Gen. MacArthur's invasion of New Guinea Allied commanders in the field were puzzled by the ability of the Jap forces to carry out the seemingly impossible task of bringing supplies to their advanced troops without leaving any signs whatsoever revealing their supply lines or the method of transportation. Although the supplies *had* to go over the Owen Stanley mountains, daytime aërial photo reconnaissance revealed absolutely no tracks or traces that could explain the puzzle.

Night photo missions were then flown and on the photos of the same areas which had shown nothing before, the PIs spotted and marked the routes of several mule supply trains operating only under cover of darkness—until they were blasted off the mountain sides.

In this way the PIs served in all theaters of war, supplying their unit commanders with a steady stream of accurate information, both strategic and tactical. From providing photo interpretations which enabled the Air Force to destroy the elusive Italian cruiser *Trieste* when she was anchored off La Maddelena on Sardinia, to spotting the drying laundry of a camouflaged Nazi unit in bivouac in the woods of Bavaria the PI gathered a wealth of vital information about the enemy. He has rightly earned his name: "America's Secret Agent No One."

Pictures from the third plane revealed the exact spot where the troops disappeared into camouflaged installations.

Winner Take All

TIME WAS WHEN BATTLES AND EVEN WARS WERE SOMETIMES DECIDED BY SINGLE COMBAT BETWEEN CHOSEN CHAMPIONS. HERE FOLLOW THE RECORDS OF CERTAIN NOTABLE CHAMPION-FIGHTS.

by PAUL JOHNSTONE

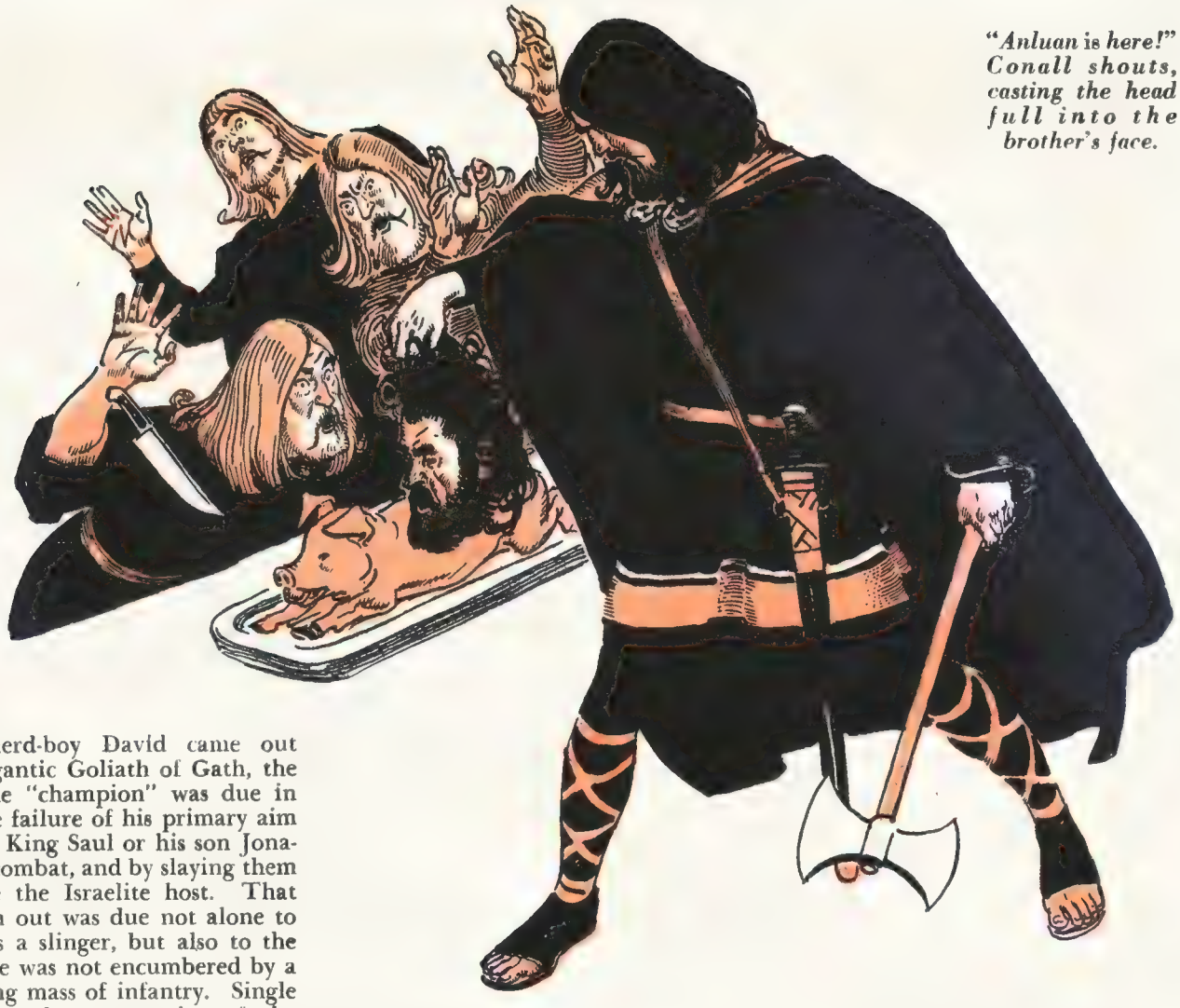
WHEN we speak of a modern athletic title-holder as a "champion," we place him in an august line of succession running back to Hercules and Goliath of Gath. For the proudest title of pugilist, golfer or tennis star is derived from the terminology of an extinct sport which was perhaps the most deadly sport of all—that of champion-fighting.

"Champion" derives from that same Latin word *campus* (field) still extant in the sense of a college campus. It is even more closely related to German *Kampf* (fight). The explanation for this curious linkage is found in Low Latin, where *campio* (plural *campiones*) is the Roman legionaries' slang for a warrior who steps forward into the space between two opposing armies, to offer single combat. But the custom is far older than the name.

When Schliemann excavated the royal graves of the prehistoric Greek kings of Mycenae, he found that these nameless leaders had been buried with a profusion of weapons. They were warrior-kings. Their graves also contained certain gems, engraved with scenes of combat. In one, a swordsman has eluded his rival's spear-thrust, and is about to deal the finishing stroke (an overhand stab) over the top of his foe's huge ox-hide shield. This is much less likely to belong to myth than to be a glorification of an episode in the career of the king for whom it was made—it is just possible that he was that Perseus (Pterseus, the Destroyer) so famed in impossible legend. Clearly, in the Middle Bronze Age—say, about 1500 B.C.—champion-fighting was the sport (perhaps rather the duty) of kings.

This came about very simply. In the Bronze Age, good weapons were rare and costly. A royal "hero," secure in his helm and shield, corselet and greaves, armed with sword or battle-axe, could hack his way almost at will through the ill-armed, unarmored enemy—until he met another "hero." Then the result of the battle hinged on their encounter. Modern warfare aims at securing the surrender of the enemy government by destroying its forces. In heroic warfare, the simpler course was adopted of compelling surrender by killing off the government—the king and his chief men. When

When the shepherd-boy David came out against gigantic Goliath of Gath, he was not encumbered by a mass of infantry.



"Anluan is here!" Conall shouts, casting the head full into the brother's face.

the shepherd-boy David came out against gigantic Goliath of Gath, the rage of the "champion" was due in part to the failure of his primary aim —to entice King Saul or his son Jonathan into combat, and by slaying them demoralize the Israelite host. That David won out was due not alone to his skill as a slinger, but also to the fact that he was not encumbered by a surrounding mass of infantry. Single combat was the prerogative of the heavily armed noble, and the use of a sling was probably regarded as "not sporting."

It is worth noting that Goliath's death took all the fight out of the Philistine host. Incidentally, the Philistines were "displaced persons" from the vicinity of Greece, and so Goliath and his comrades may have been in part descended from the fighting kings of Mycenae, and have transplanted their customs to Palestine. But David's victory could not give prestige to so homely a missile weapon as a smooth stone. Soon David had forsaken his sling for the sword of Goliath.

This brings us to a distinction between champion-fighting and ordinary dueling. The body and gear of the fallen champion becomes the property of the victor. Another characteristic is the usual absence of a "point of honor;" but the fundamental difference is that champion-fights have a direct bearing on the outcome of some larger struggle. . . .

In the Iron Age increasing discipline and better arms for the rank and file reduced the importance of champion-fighting, at least among the classical peoples. But it was never forgotten. The Romans had a special form of triumph for a conqueror who has slain his rival general in single fight. Only three such triumphs were ever claimed. One came at the battle of Clastidium (222 B.C.). During a cavalry skirmish the Gallic king, Virdumaros, challenged the Roman general, Marcus Claudius Marcellus. Marcellus was over forty-six, but he accepted the challenge, driving his spear through the mail-coat of Virdumaros, killing the Gaul and dispiriting his army. The first original Roman stage play had this encounter as its climax. But the consensus of Roman military opinion frowned on such knightly episodes. There is a tale of a stern Roman who put his own son to death for violating an order against champion-fighting. Legionary efficiency and discipline had reduced knightly gallantry to an unwelcome archaism.

Outside Roman frontiers, the old custom went on. In Celtic Ireland, as in old Gaul, the most famous champion present at a feast had the right to carve. The most lifelike and dramatic of the Irish hero-tales, "The Carving of Mac Datho's Pig," relates to the time of Christ, or slightly later. Mac Datho, a wealthy landowner of Leinster, has killed his famous fatted pig for a feast, to which the Kings of Ulster and Connaught, always bitter foes, were invited. Leinster was neutral ground.

A great warrior of Connacht, named Ket, was thrust forward by King Aillill, to claim the honor of carving the milk-fed boar. King Conchobar of Ulster urged his own champions to dispute his claim. But Ket, a "fierce wolf of evil to the Ulstermen," shamed one after another by reciting how he had slain the son of one, crippled another, killed the brother of a third, without any successful reprisal. At last, the scornful Ket is about to carve the roasted pig. Then in comes a belated Ulster hero, Conall Kernach. "Get up from that pig, Ket!" he demands.

After a long duel of brags, Ket yields. As he steps aside, he snarls: "You would not be carving here this day, if my brother Anluan were here!" Conall reaches inside his baggy tunic. "Anluan *is* here!" he shouts, casting the head of Anluan, whom he had met on the way to the feast, full into his brother's face. After this, Conall bent over the pig, took its tail between his teeth, and began to carve. He gave

the best portions to the Ulstermen, and the feast ended in such a fight that "seven rivers of blood ran out the seven doors of Mac Datho's Hostel."

CELTS and Teutons lagged behind the Romans in culture, of course. But the highly civilized Persians were great champion-fighters, as they had been since the days of legendary Rustam. Persian and barbarian infiltration during the Migration Period revived champion-fighting in the Roman armies. The great Roman Emperor Aurelian, the "restorer of Empire" and builder of the still-visible walls of Rome (A.D. 270-275) owed his elevation as much to his own prowess as to any other factor. In his youth, he boasted, he once slew forty-eight Sarmatians, fierce Iranian horsemen of the South Russian steppes, in a single day. In five months of fighting, he killed one thousand men with his own sword. Of course most of these were *not* slain in single combat, and Aurelian may have been as over-optimistic as modern communiqués. But his boasts mark the return of a "heroic" atmosphere. In every land, the champion-fighter is far from modest. Lacking the services of a press agent, he does his best to enhance his prestige by loud boasting at every opportunity.

King Theodoric the Ostrogoth, who ruled Italy from A.D. 493 to 526, shines in Germanic tradition as the hero Dietrich von Bern:

King Tidrik sits intill Bern (Verona)
And rooses him of his might
Sae mony has he vanquished
Baith kemp and noble knight.

For one of his victories we have contemporary evidence—in the days of his youth, when he was only the leader of a small war-band along the Danube, he fought and slew a Hunnish chieftain named Xerxer. Years later, when Theodoric was the most powerful ruler in Western Europe, the Roman orator Ennodius composed a panegyric to be recited in Theodoric's presence, and carefully included this duel as one of the glories of the king's career.

In A.D. 507 another Gothic king, Alaric II, ruler of Spain and southern Gaul, met King Chlodovech the Frank in the battle of Vouille—one of the turning-points of European history. King Alaric was not the sacker of Rome (Alaric I, who died in 411) but he had succeeded to his throne, treasure and prestige. Chlodovech ("Clovis," or, in modern German, Ludwig) appears to have charged Alaric in the midst of his mounted

At Hastings a blow from William of Normandy's mace struck down Leofwine.

Illustrated by Frederick Chapman

Canute danced around, jeering: "Edmund, you're too fat!" Edmund's sword knocked Canute to his knees. "Not too fat to make you bow!"

bodyguard, and been lucky enough to run him through with his first lance-thrust. The enraged Goths surrounded Chlodovech, but his breastplate turned their lances, and his swift steed enabled him to escape to the ranks of his own men. As the news of Alaric's death spread, the famed Visigothic warriors turned to flight. But for this battle, the land we know as France might be Gothia.

The pages of the Byzantine historian Procopius are full of champion-fights—now invariably on horseback, with the lance as the primary weapon. It is exactly the sort of fighting which fills the romances of King Arthur, a British contemporary of Procopius—and is there usually dismissed as the imagination of a later period! In one such pre-battle duel, in 542, an Ostrogoth named Wiliaris met a Persian exile named Artabazes, who fought as champion of the Byzantine "Romans." Passing at a gallop, Artabazes stabbed Wiliaris, killing him instantly. But the dead Goth's hand remained firm on his spear, its blade having become lodged against a rock on the ground; this held Wiliaris' body erect in the saddle. Artabazes turned, drew his sword, and charged back. But as he struck down the already-dead Goth, the point of Wiliaris' spear scratched his throat; the bleeding could not be stanched and three days later he was dead—slain by the spear of a dead man.

A frequent episode of legend has two friends or close relations meet in single combat, unaware of their foe's identity. With the bare-face helmets of classical and earlier times, this motif seems unlikely except in cases of long separation. But in the Migration Period helmets of a different type, covering all but the eyes and mouth, were coming into use. The silver-decorated helm of the still nameless Anglo-Saxon king buried at Sutton Hoo in England is of this kind. It would make such mistakes easier, if one or both warriors had changed helmets since their last meeting.

In 627 the long and utterly exhausting war between New Persia and Byzantium came to its climax at the battle of Nineveh. For over two centuries custom had forbidden Roman emperors to go to battle in person; but the desperate state of affairs had forced the Emperor Heraclius II, a gallant warrior in his youth, to take the field. At Nineveh (already a "ghost city") Greco-Roman and Persian fought each other to a standstill. In the gathering dusk, Heraclius charged, fought again as in his youth, met and slew the Persian commander. The Persians broke and fled, and Heraclius was able to dictate his own terms of peace, ending a war that had seemed hopelessly lost. His valor was commemorated in a Greek pseudo-epic, the *Heracleid*. His victories had broken the back of Persia, which a few years later fell before the onrush of an Arab horde.

The Viking leaders were occasional champion-fighters, and they sometimes settled disputes within their own ranks by that method. When, about 860, the Viking chief Weland allowed himself to be baptized while in France, some of his fellows cast off their allegiance to him. The result was a single combat, in which Weland was slain. Here the fight approaches a duel, but qualifies as a champion-fight because it settled a larger question than a personal feud. Hasting, the Viking who later was driven from England by King Alfred, slew two French leaders in a single skirmish. One was Count Robert the Strong, forefather of many French kings, brought down by Hasting's javelin. A Breton chief, Gurvaint, challenged Hasting, but their fight seems never to have come off.

One of the most famous of champion-fights is that between King Edmund Ironside and the Dane, Canute, with the throne of England at stake. Canute, the tale goes, danced around the heavier Englishman, jeering: "Edmund, you're too fat!" A stroke from Edmund's sword knocked Canute to hands and knees. "Not too fat to make you bow!" observed Edmund. This exchange led to more talk, ending in a peace-treaty dividing England between them, in A.D. 1016.

Unfortunately, it seems probable that this famous fight never occurred at all. The oldest accounts of the treaty-meeting on the islet of Olney do not mention it, and the historical context makes it unlikely that the crafty, cautious Dane, who had just won the great battle of Assandun, would have risked his life in this way. It seems likely that the story arose from the meeting of the kings on the island, so like a *holmgang*. Perhaps even some of the English and Danish warriors misunderstood the nature of the meeting, and the rumor arose before news of the treaty became public. It is just possible that there was a brief exchange of words and blows

A feature of the Battle of Novarette was the victory of Sir John Chandos—in his late sixties—over Martin Ferrara.

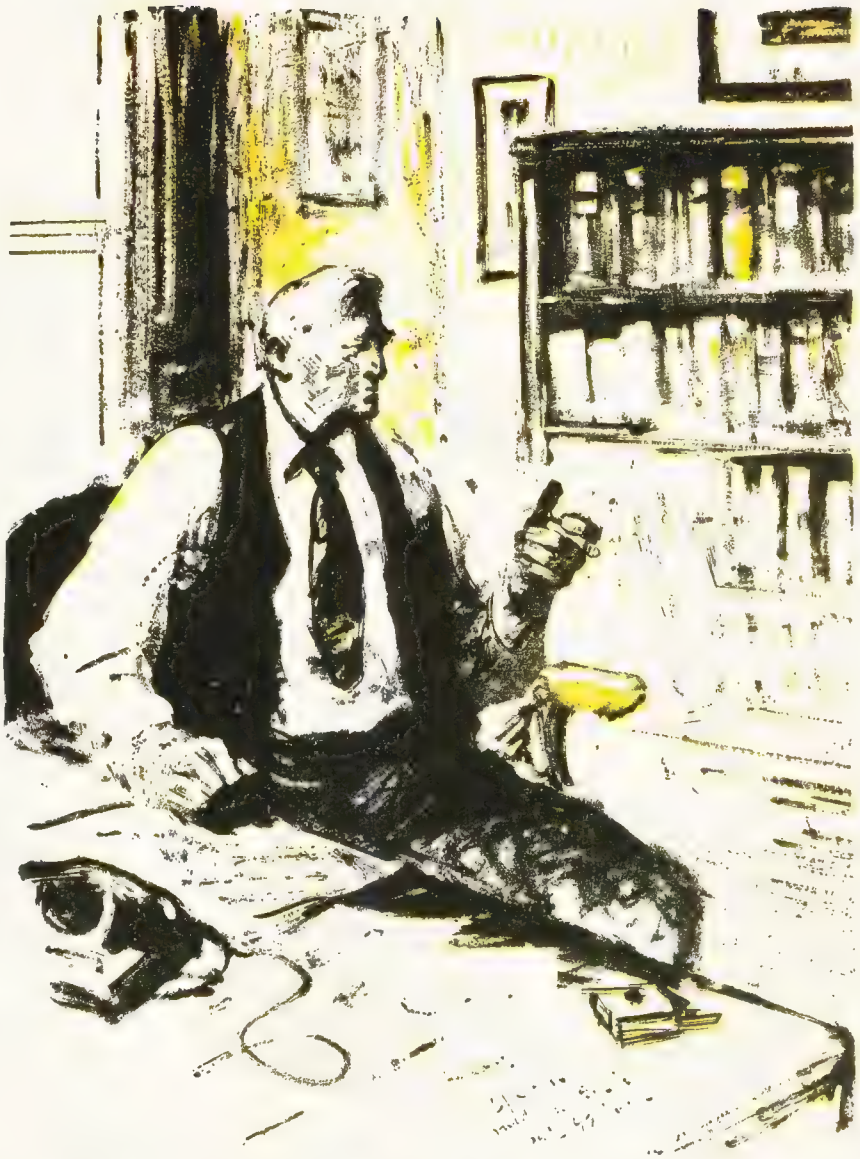
between Edmund and Canute at some earlier battle, later transferred to their final meeting.

It is probably historically true that William of Normandy challenged King Harold Godwineson to single combat for the crown of England in 1066. King Harold declined, perhaps wisely; William was a great "man of his hands." At the Battle of Hastings he tried hard to reach Harold. A blow from William's mace struck down, and probably killed, Harold's brother Leofwine; but it was left for a Norman archer to slay the last Saxon king.

The crown of Scotland hung for an instant in the balance at Bannockburn in 1314. This fight was utterly unplanned. King Robert Bruce, mounted on a pony (probably one of the hardy little Galloway nags) had ridden out to survey the approaching English array. An Anglo-Norman knight named Bohun (first name uncertain) saw him and charged. Bohun was mounted on his huge stallion, and armed with a long lance. Bruce seemed not to notice his rush, and the other Scots were too far away. Coming at full tilt, Bohun seemed certain to overthrow and probably transfix the Scots king, when Bruce suddenly touched spurs to his pony. The great lance missed, as Bruce's pony sprang aside. Rising in his stirrups, Bruce drove his battle-axe crashing through Bohun's helm and skull. So Bannockburn began, with the English host disheartened by this ill omen. It ended in the greatest defeat that ever befell an English army.

Perhaps the last champion-fight of note also took place in Scotland, as a sequel to the battle of Killiecrankie in 1689. Among the defeated Covenanters was "Auld" Ringan Oliver, a man of famous strength. He fled as far as Dunkeld, and there, already exhausted by a day's flight, he was challenged by a famous Highlander, Rory Dhu Mhor (Great Black Rory). In this old-world encounter of claymore and target, as "Homeric" as anything in Homer, Rory cut his Lowland foe to shreds. At last, bleeding from ten wounds, Ringan Oliver fell to his knees. For an instant, with victory certain, Black Rory relaxed. Oliver lunged, thrust him through the heart. With one last bellow, Black Rory fell.

Under the circumstances, return matches were almost nonexistent. Yet while today a pugilist is old at thirty, the old champion-fighters fought on to fabulous ages. In the Fourteenth Century, a feature of the Battle of Navarette was the victory of the English knight, Sir John Chandos, over a Spaniard, Martin Ferrara. At that time Chandos was in his late sixties, and blind in one eye!



The Talking

An old-time lumberman and a modern forester fight out their differences in the Northwest timber country.

Johnny didn't even look at Julie as he went through the outer office, which took considerable will power. Julie was a sleek, gorgeous young lady with hair as black as the inside of a crow, and eyes as green as an acre of clover, and she was, today, wearing a white blouse with a big green scarf tied in a bow-knot, and a green skirt. She looked good enough to take a bite of even if you weren't hungry.

Johnny, however, kept his eyes fastened on the door of her father's office and went inside.

Alec O'Brien looked up as Johnny came in. He nodded. "Hi, Johnny."

"Hello, Alec," Johnny said. He sat down in a chair and stuck his legs out in front of him. They were long legs. Johnny was a thin-faced young man with unruly brown hair, and serious brown eyes.

Alec shoved some papers around on his desk and found a cigarette. He lighted a match on his thumbnail, applied it to the cigarette and squinted through the smoke. "What's this about you feuding with Cranston?" he said.

Johnny looked down at his caulked boots. "The guy's a jerk, Alec," he said. "If he's a fire warden, I'm Joe Stalin."

Forester

by STEVE McNEIL

"What seems to be the trouble?"

"If those snags in the South Fork area aren't felled," Johnny said doggedly, "that area is going to explode. The fire'll cross the creek, take the town, and God knows how much timber." Johnny reached out, took one of Alec's smokes and lighted it. He carefully broke the match in two and put it on an ashtray. "Cranston just laughs about it. A regular comedian."

"I can't spare the men," Alec said.

"You can use power-saw sets and have that area safe in a month. The men don't have to worry where they drop them and—"

"Cranston says—"

"'Cranston says!'" Johnny yelped. "That broken-down Weyerhaeuser wonder doesn't have brains enough to say anything. I spent five years in college, and I've been here with St. John Pulp & Paper for three years. I'm a forester, but that guy Cranston knows all about it because he was a rigging slinger before he busted up a hand and couldn't climb any more. Hell!"

"Anything else on your mind?" Alec said.

"Yes," Johnny said. "That timber west of Devon's mountain should be cut. It's overripe, and the parasites have started on it."

"I'm not going to move a side over there just because your microscope found a couple of bugs in some hemlock bark."

"I suppose Cranston said it isn't necessary?"

"You sound pretty bitter about Cranston, Johnny," Alec said. "He's a good man. Just because he knows a pretty girl when he sees one shouldn't make him a poor fire warden."

Johnny flushed. "That's my personal business. If Julie—" Then he stopped.

"Yes, Johnny?"

"Nothing."

"All right. Now here's another thing: I want you to talk to the Junior Chamber of Commerce in Portland on Thursday. Jim Chase made all the arrangements. Evening meeting—eight o'clock. Call Jim when you get in and he'll give you the dope. You know the spiel."

"I should," Johnny said, bitterly.

"The Logging Congress starts Saturday. I'm going in early in the week to do some committee work. I may line up a couple more talks for you during the congress. It's good publicity."

Johnny stood up. "Look, Alec, I've talked to Kiwanis, Rotary, Lions, all the schools in the county, and about a hundred women's clubs since I came on this job. Everybody in the State must be tired of hearing about St. John's policy on reforestation, selective cutting, fire protection, and all the rest. Now what the hell am I—a forester or an after-dinner speaker?"

"Don't you like your job, Johnny?" Alec said softly.

"Sure I like my job," Johnny said, "if I had a chance to do the job! When old Abel Martinson, down in San Francisco, hired me, he said I'd have a chance to do some progressive work. But every old-time logger in the country will have to die or get killed before they'll believe that there's anything to tree farming. Take Weyerhaeuser, up in Washington! They're progressive enough to—"

"You take 'em," Alec said.

"And Crown-Willamette," Johnny said. "They work their foresters, they don't use 'em for after-dinner speakers. Right now they got a helicopter in Clatsop County, planting seeds."

"Foresters, slip-stick artists, professors, helicopters," Alec roared. "What's this business coming to, anyway?"

"It's going progressive," Johnny said, "whether you know it or not."

"About that Junior Chamber of Commerce—"

"I'll go," Johnny said, wearily. "I'll talk. The talking forester, that's me."

He walked out of Alec's office, wondering why he stayed with St. John. Forester! That was a laugh! After-

"Well, farmer," Gordon said, "hear you opened your mouth and put your foot in it."

dinner speaker—company clown—publicity man!

Julie looked up from her typewriter. She wrinkled her nose at him. Johnny scowled, but he couldn't resist. He was nuts about her.

"Hello, Julie," he said.

"I heard you and Dad yelling at each other," she said. "What now?"

"Nothing," Johnny said. "Want to go into Portland with me Thursday? Have to talk to Junior Chamber."

"Johnny, I'm sorry, but—"

"But you've a date with Laughing Boy," Johnny said.

"Well, at least Gordon Cranston isn't grim all the time—scowling and growling at everyone."

"If everyone would wake up around here, I'd be a laughing boy too."

"Why don't you do something about it, then?"

"What?" Johnny said. "Stuff a forestry manual down Alec's throat? 'I'm a logger, not a tree farmer,' he says. He's a tree farmer and doesn't know it. Alec won't let me fall those snags over in the South Fork area. Why, I've seen burning snags throw fire for two miles, and so has he. I've seen a water-soaked snag explode like a stick of dynamite—"

"Snags, forestry, fire, tree-farming," Julie intoned. "Do you ever think about anything else?"

"I can remember when you thought it was great stuff."

"I can remember when you didn't yell at me all the time."

"That was before the Weyerhaeuser wonder showed up."

"But he's really very nice," Julie said.

Johnny gritted his teeth, turned on his heel and started out of the office. He met Gordon Cranston on his way in.

"Hiya, tree farmer," Gordon said. He was a heavy-shouldered, black-haired, handsome young man with a perpetual grin on his face.

"Hello, Gordon," Johnny replied.

"Crop coming along all right?" Gordon grinned.

"The crop is fine," Johnny said, evenly, "if it doesn't burn up."

"Old worry-wart," Gordon laughed. "Listen, tree farmer, if a fire starts, we'll put her out. We got lookouts enough to spot the smoke from one of Alec's cigars."

"You sure?" Johnny said. "When did you check those lookouts last?" He knew that Gordon hadn't checked them for a week.

Gordon flushed. "I'll do my job, tree farmer, don't worry about me."

"I hope you're right," Johnny said.

Thursday afternoon, he went over to the office to check with Alec before leaving for Portland. Not that there was anything to check. Not that Alec thought him capable of doing anything in Portland except talk. He pushed open the office door, and saw that Julie was wearing the dress with a skirt that swirled, and that was gay and splashy—a dress that put a twinkle in her eyes and a bounce in her walk. A dress, these days, for Gordon Cranston. Well, he'd be damned if he'd be a dog in the manger. He dug a smile out of his bootlaces and said, "Hello, good-looking."

"Hello, handsome," Julie said.

It was almost like the old days—the days before the Weyerhaeuser wonder.

"Alec in?" Johnny said.

Julie shook her head. "Went to Portland this morning to line things up for the Logging Congress."

"Guess I'll get going myself, then," Johnny said.

"Still want me to go to Portland with you?"

Johnny wanted her to go with him the way he wanted his heart to beat, and he started to say, "Hell, yes," but he didn't. She had had a fight with Cranston, that was it. Well, if he wasn't going to be a dog in the manger, neither was he going to be the third leg of a triangle.

"What's the matter, have a battle with Laughing Boy?"

"Can't I change my mind?" Julie snapped. "You've been acting like a jealous old woman ever since—"

"Don't flatter yourself," Johnny said. "Just because you happen to have deluxe equipment, you needn't think that every man is—"

"Oh, so now I'm conceited?"

"I didn't say so, but now that you mention—"

"Well, I didn't have a fight with Gordon, and I did want to go to Portland, but you're so nasty and jealous you can go to Singapore, and go by yourself, for all I care."

Johnny looked at her. Her lower lip was quivering. He ran his hands through his hair, decided tentatively to see what would happen if he walked over and put his arms around her, and said that he had been a dope, and that he was in love with her and always would be—but as he hesitated, Gordon Cranston walked into the office.

Julie stiffened the quivering lip and turned on a smile. She tipped her head to one side and looked at Gordon.

"Hello, handsome," she said.

That did it. Johnny turned on his heel and walked out of the office. He slammed the door.

The members of the Junior Chamber of Commerce may have wondered why the young forester who was speaking to them that evening showed signs of bitterness.

Johnny hoped that none of the men attending the Logging Congress were there. He found himself concluding, "Very often the only way for the forester to perform his duties for the best interests of his company, his country, and his conscience, is to go ahead with his plans in spite of lack of coöperation, in spite of the fact that actually, his function is advisory. Forestry is an exacting science, and as necessary to modern logging as a cutting crew. It is only when the forester fails to receive coöperation, mainly from the old-time logger, that his rôle is reduced to that of a prophet without honor."

JOHNNY got up too late the next morning to have breakfast at the cookhouse. He hadn't returned from Portland until one in the morning, and he slept till eight. He drove downtown, went into a restaurant and picked up the morning paper. He glanced at the headlines, turned the page, and the first thing that he saw were the words: "FORESTER PROPHET WITHOUT HONOR. Lack of coöperation main bar to practice of selective cutting, says speaker."

Johnny, his eyes bulging, read the story. The reporter had evidently taken short-hand notes, because he quoted Johnny at some length. Well, that did it, if nothing else did. Alec would tie the can to him for sure. He had about a week of grace, unless Alec decided to make a special trip up from Portland for that purpose, because the Logging Congress lasted a week.

Johnny went outside, got into his pickup and went up to the office to see whether Alec had called—to see whether there was any point in going to work at all that morning.

WHEN he pushed open the door and went in, Julie said, "Oh, Johnny!"

"What's the matter?"

"Are you crazy? Alec will write out your time when he gets back."

"Who cares?"

Julie stared at him. "Don't you?"

Johnny shook his head. "I'm fed up with being called *professor*, and *farmer*. I'm sick and tired of making speeches. Or maybe I'm just sick and tired of being sick and tired."

"Oh," Julie said. She sat down at her desk. "What are you going to do?"

"Before Alec comes back, I'm going to do some work. Then I guess I can get on with Crown, or Weyerhaeuser. I can be a Weyerhaeuser wonder, too." He turned on his heel and went out of the office. He wondered whether he had seen tears in Julie's eyes.

He got into his pickup and looked up Lars Jorgenson, who ran the cutting crew. "Lars, I want three sets of fallers for those snags over in the South Fork area. I want them down, starting at that old railroad grade and working back."

Lars scratched his head. He was tall and grizzled and long-jawed. "I don't know," he said, doubtfully. "Alec didn't say nothing about that."

"You let me worry about Alec," Johnny said.

"Well, all right, Johnny, but I know what Alec will say. You know Alec."

Johnny knew Alec. Alec would have a stroke, but it would only be one of many strokes that he would shortly have. At least, he thought, grimly, Julie won't be able to ask why I don't do something besides talk.

Johnny went back to the office. He pushed open the door and saw Gordon Cranston sitting beside Julie's desk.

"Well, farmer," Gordon said, "hear you opened your mouth and put your foot in it."

"Go away," Johnny said, annoyed, "you bother me. I've got work to do." Johnny picked up a telephone and put a call to Crown's forestry division. While he waited he looked at Gordon, who seemed a little puzzled. Presently Jim Tabor, Crown's forester, answered.

"Jim?" Johnny said. "What's the deal on that helicopter? When will he be through over there?"

"Don't tell me that Alec has gone progressive!" Jim said.

"No, but I have. How about sending him over here on his way back to Yakima?"

"Sure thing. He'll be through today. You'll have to get your own seed."

"Okay," Johnny said, and hung up. He looked at Gordon. "If you don't have any business in this office, how about getting the hell out so we can get a little work done?"

Gordon looked at Johnny for a few moments. Johnny stood up and kept his eyes on Gordon. Presently Gordon snorted. "Regular big shot," he said. He turned and went out.

"Johnny," Julie said, plaintively. "What's the matter?"

"And tell that Weyerhaeuser wonder to stay out of the office. He's a pest."

"Yes, Johnny," Julie said. She stared at him.

He went into his own office and went over the maps he had made for proposed fire roads, and dug out the

old maps outlining the areas he had figured long ago on seeding—maps which he had rolled up and put away.

The next day he went up into the South Fork area. He heard the power saws working before he got up to the snag area. When he got there, things looked a little better already. Give him a week, he thought, and they'd have a chance if a fire started. He looked around at the clear sky and kicked at some underbrush. It crackled underfoot. . . .

The next day he made a tour of all company lookouts, even though it wasn't strictly his job. Apparently Gordon Cranston hadn't been interested. He hadn't been to any lookouts for two weeks. One man had broken his field-glasses. Another man hadn't been briefed on his Osborne fire-finder, and had no idea how it worked. The telephone line was out at another lookout, and at Burnt Hill there was no one at all. Johnny picked up the telephone, cranked it, and asked the operator for Cranston.

When Gordon answered, Johnny yelled, "Listen, fire warden, I'm at No. 4 lookout on Burnt Hill. There isn't any lookout here, and apparently hasn't been any for a week. The men tell me they haven't been checking in at intervals; they haven't been briefed on their duties. You'd better flag yourself around and get a man up here. And you'd better lay off the romancing and get on the ball."

"Who the hell is this?" Gordon said.

"Johnny Haggard, the farmer," he said. "Remember me?"

Illustrated by John Fulton

When he got into the office, the helicopter pilot was waiting for him. Johnny spent the rest of the day going over the maps, and making a flight with him over the area to be seeded. "I'll start at daylight," the pilot said. "You got a man to ride with me?"

Johnny nodded.

When the pilot had gone, Julie said, "Johnny, what's the matter?"

"Nothing."

"Well, you act so grim, as if I'd done something wrong. And now you're running around, ordering helicopters and three sets of fallers, and taking over Gordon's job, and you know darned well that as soon as Dad gets back, you'll be fired. You could have covered up that newspaper story. You could have said you were misquoted, or something. You could have talked your way out of that."

"I'm through talking," Johnny said. "You should be pleased. You were always the one needling me to do something besides talk."

"I didn't mean for you to get fired."

"Well, I'm going to be fired for something I've done, anyway, rather than something I haven't done." Johnny rolled up his maps and left.

Julie stared at the door through which he had gone. She looked at it for perhaps half a minute, chewing at her lower lip. "The big dope!" she said, softly. . . .

At dawn, Johnny got the helicopter pilot squared away. He sent Jimmy Abrams with him, armed with maps, waved them off and went back to the office.

Half an hour later, Julie came into the office. Johnny stared. He looked at his watch. "What the devil are you doing here this time of day?"

Julie grinned at him. "Want to see the fun. What are we doing today that's new and startling? It's getting so I can hardly wait for a new day to see what's going to happen."

Johnny peered at her. "You feeling okay?"

She nodded. "Fine." She picked up a broom and started sweeping the office.

"What's the big idea? Why not wait for Jake to do that?"

"We might have company," she said. "Wouldn't want them to find this nice, progressive office dirty."

Johnny looked at her suspiciously. "What kind of company?"

She shrugged. "Who knows? Who knows what will happen—these days?"

Johnny grunted and started making out some fire-fighting requisitions.

At eight-thirty, the door opened Alec was the first man inside, followed by about twenty men, all with little badges reading, "Logging Congress" on their lapels, with the names of their companies. They crowded into the office and Alec came over to Julie and Johnny. "All right," he growled. "What's the big idea?"

Johnny stared at him. "I don't know," he said.

"Well, what in hell—" Alec said.

"Sh-h-h-h!" Julie said. "Are they all here?"

Alec came over to Julie and Johnny. "What's the big idea?" Johnny stared. "I don't know," he said.

"Press, Logging Congress people, and even Abel Martinson. It better be good."

Johnny wished that he could crawl under a table. "Me too," he said. He saw the tall, white-haired Abel Martinson, the head man of St. John standing to one side.

Julie stepped forward. "Gentlemen, this is Johnny Haggard, head forester of St. John Pulp & Paper, in this division, who has arranged this demonstration. Mr. Haggard, a graduate of Oregon State College in forestry, thought you'd be interested in observing seeding with the use of a helicopter, and he has also arranged to show you gentlemen a sample of St. John's fire-prevention work involving the falling of thousands of dangerous snags in the South Fork area."

Johnny stared at her, his heart pounding. She winked at him. "If any of you gentlemen would care to go up with the helicopter pilot and see, at first hand, how the seeding is done, I think Mr. Haggard can call him on our short-wave radio, customarily used for communications during a large fire."

Everyone hesitated—and then Abel Martinson stepped forward. "Call up the whirligig, Johnny," he said. "I'll take a ride with him."

Johnny went into the radio-room, called the pilot and told him to land in the truck lot. He sent Abel Martinson with Julie, and then several men came over to Johnny with pencils and pads. *"Oregonian,"* one of them said. *"Journal,"* said another. There were six newspapermen in all, including men from the wire services, and several free-lance men. Alec stood on the fringe, looking rather stunned.

"Apparently," one of the men said, "you weren't speaking of your own company the other night at the Junior Chamber dinner."

Johnny glanced at Alec, and realized, with something akin to shock, that Alec was getting old. Johnny had never thought of him as being old. He had seemed ageless, growing only tougher through the years. The lines in Alec's face were deep, and his heavy shoulders seemed stooped. But his eyes were steady on Johnny's, holding neither resentment, or surrender.

"No," Johnny said. "I wasn't. Without Alec O'Brien's complete cooperation, I could have done nothing."

The newspapermen wrote on their pads. Johnny looked over at Alec. The old man winked at him.

When the interview was over, the newspapermen went out to look at the helicopter. As they left, old Abel Martinson came stomping into the office, followed by Julie.

"Damndest thing I ever saw. Cockeyed whirligig flits around like a blasted humming bird—scatters seeds like Paul Bunyan. Damned fine job you're doing, young feller," he said to Johnny.

JOHNNY waved his hand toward Alec. "Alec's the one," he said. "I just do the detail work."

The old man grinned at Alec. "Young feller's lying like a horsethief, ain't he, Alec?" He cackled and shook a finger at Johnny. "There's more to logging than tree farming, young feller. You still got to harvest the crop, and that's where us old timber beasts come in. C'mon, Alec, let's get this gang going. Time we get back to Portland the liquor'll be all gone." They left the office.

Johnny looked at Julie. "What happened?"

She smiled at him. "I called the newspapers. And I called the man in charge of the program at the Logging Congress. Asked how they'd like to see a demonstration of seeding by helicopter. I knew old Abel Martinson was at the meeting, and I knew that after all the high-minded speeches they'd been hearing, they'd be impressed by what you were doing, even if you were only doing it to get fired."

Johnny frowned. "But you were sore at me, Julie. And that Weyerhaeuser wonder was—"

Julie sighed. "What do you want a girl to do? All you did was talk, and argue, and go around being grim. I had to make you jealous, or something. Sometimes I wonder if you're ever going to stop talking."

"Try me now," he said. "Try me now and see if I talk." He put out his arms and Julie walked into them, and he kissed her. Nobody talked.

Fine

Monkeys in their native trees are very different from the unfortunates in cages.

With a low whimper, Monita dipped water from the clay bowl.

I TRUDGED down the beach from Puerto Barrios, beyond Tres Cabox, along a lonely and deserted seashore, to make a survey of the coconut-oil possibilities on the strip of shore at the border between Guatemala and Honduras. With the aid of a Carib boy, I built my thatched shelter on the edge of the jungle, facing toward the open Gulf of Mexico to the north. While the construction was under way, a troop of perhaps a score of Central American "howlers" made a squatting group in the nearby trees. They were highly vocal and critical, and extremely curious.

After we finished the shelter, my Carib helper returned to his village. For a number of weeks I was to be engaged in experiments and estimating the possible production cost of the coconut oil, for financing purposes. My nearest human neighbors were the Caribs at the village thirty miles up the beach.

At dawn following my first night in the thatched house, by way of a friendly gesture, I filled a small box with broken lumps of *panela*, a crude, hard native brown sugar, and placed it beneath a large *guanacaste* tree which I saw had been used as a sort of headquarters by the grayed, hard-bitten old boy who seemed to be the patriarch of the monkey troop. I returned to the house to prepare my own breakfast. Shortly afterward my neighbors began chattering their arrival. In a few moments I heard a shrill questioning. One of them had discovered the box beneath the tree. There was much suppressed excitement, and questioning notes from tree-top positions.

Finally curiosity conquered. The old fellow, brave chap—I named him *Patrón* (boss)—decided to investigate. He descended his tree-trunk cautiously, pausing every foot or so in his progress, suspicion personified. A nervous titter from one of the females startled him. His temper flared. He leaped forward and bit one of the females savagely on the neck. She whimpered.

He renewed his descent, now with whipped-up courage. At last he reached the box, nervously cautious, and sniffed. I could almost feel the others in the trees holding their breaths. Old Patron cautiously eased his black paw into the box. He picked up one of the brown lumps, then dropped it as if it were hot. Again he picked it up. This time he sniffed it curiously. He put his red tongue to it. I saw his pleased expression as he chattered excitedly.

Then the whole troup scampered down, grasping, scolding, fighting for lumps of the hard sugar, for all the world like a bunch of pickaninnies in a watermelon patch.

Observing the nearly human antics of Central American monkeys was not new to me; but these fellows here on this coconut-lined shore were just as fascinating as the first bunch I had ever seen, floating with unbelievable grace and sureness through the trees of the tropical jungle, as certain of themselves as a mother-in-law in her own living-room.

Long ago I had learned, through lonely months of roaming the jungle trails, that no white man who has lived in the jungle long enough to appreciate and respect its ways, will kill a monkey under any circumstances.

There is something about a small, wistful and all-inquisitive face peering at you from high up in his leafy retreat that gives you a queer and penetrating sensation you do not soon forget. After a few months in the jungle alone, your appreciation of these chattering gossips of the trees grows; and before you realize it, you begin to look upon the serious-faced little rascals as folks.

To me, they are fine folks, most of them—folks you can trust as friends.

EACH morning after finally introducing the monkeys to the sugar, I would place a box of the sweets out for them, and woe to me if I should oversleep! The most awful simian imprecations, the most dreadful primate curses, would be my lot, interspersed with coconut fronds and branches pelting on the roof of my shelter. A hideous bedlam was my lot until I got up and humbly carried out the sugar.

I was learning more and more about my neighbors, and getting better acquainted with their individual idiosyncrasies. I noted they used certain lianas and certain branches in getting from place to place, and rarely deviated from these paths. These constituted the highways and

Folks with Long Tails

by RUEL McDANIEL *with* E. LIVINGSTON

streets through the treetops. Invariably the gang would arrive just at dawn to spy upon my activities for the day. My every action was a subject of comment and criticism.

At times I became quite self-conscious, but no privacy was possible. Wherever I went, shining pairs of eyes observed my every act; and I knew, tattletales that they all were, that my every action would be duly reported to all and sundry.

I found they were all abjectly terrified by the sight of a snake. I had a beautiful snakeskin which I eventually intended to send to the States to be made into evening shoes for a certain débutante. By tossing this skin out of the door of my house, I could produce mob hysteria in my monkey friends, and they would flee for the depths of the jungle. However, I overworked this scheme, for old Patron soon became wise. Thereafter, when I tossed it out, there still would be excited chatter for a few minutes, but no stampede as before. At last, the troop no longer would retreat, but would utter sounds which oddly sounded like horse-laughs.

One day, quietly and unobserved, I stepped out of a cool, dim jungle path to the small window in the side of my jacal. Squatted down upon a box which I used as a dressing-table was Patron, the gray rascal, delightedly squirting himself with hair tonic. Delight showed in his wrinkled old face as he sniffed with audible sighs of approval, rubbing his stomach and head with luxurious languor. That explained the disappearance of my fragrant toilet articles. The vain old sheik! And that was perhaps why the females of his entourage now crept so close to him, with admiration shining in adoring eyes.

In a spirit of deviltry one morning, I placed beneath the *guanacaste* a mixture of sweet apricot brandy and rum. As soon as I returned to the house, down slid Patron, followed by his gang. The old fellow was suspicious. I could see him cock his eyes back in the direction of the house. They all held a powwow, chattering in puzzled tones. Finally Patron—he should have known better, at his age—stuck his black paw into the liquor, and sniffed his hand. At last he licked his black fingers, squawking excitedly. Then they all fell to.

It shames me to this day, the havoc that dynamic mixture wrought among my folks of the trees. Of all the drunken antics ever performed, that score of inebriated simians excelled even the worst. They whooped and galloped, they rolled and tumbled, screamed and leaped. One would rush, shrieking, for a tree with another chasing immediately behind. Five or six feet up, his balance would desert him and down he would flop on head or shoulders.

Old Patron, by the sheer grit and the determination which made him leader, managed to gain a lower limb of the *guanacaste*. Dizzily, he raised trembling hands to his head and toppled. The tail instinctively wound around the limb; and there he hung, erupting a mixture of coconut, banana and brandy, like a miniature upside-down geyser, while the others blinked in obvious admiration.

Finally, with a fatuous grin on his face, the old fellow's tail relaxed, and he landed precisely on his head upon the soft jungle floor, completely out.

Soon the whole gang was stretched out under the trees in divers attitudes, snoring raucously, oblivious of all that went on around them. For many hours I stood guard to see that no predatory animal took advantage of my friends during their indisposition.

There is no easier way to make friends with the feminine element of a monkey family than by utilizing bright colors, perfumes and bright objects, such as beads and mirrors. However, I am sorry to say, the males seem to have more interest in hard liquors. It is no trouble whatsoever to turn one into a drunken, dissolute and faithless bounder.

AT the International Railways of Central America station in Quirigua, Guatemala, there was, for example, an old hanger-on we called Jeb. Jeb was the division superintendent's weakness. He lived at the superintendent's shack, about a hundred yards from the clubhouse. For many years it had been Jeb's custom to take a nightcap before retiring, and he would swing across from the Super's house via a telephone line to the upstairs barroom of the club. The bartender would serve him, letting the monkey sign chits for the drinks by making a pencil mark across them. The superintendent then would liquidate the chits at the end of the month.

Jeb always insisted on a stein of Pilsener served in a German mug which played a few bars of "Blue Danube" when lifted. His grin of delight at the musical notes so lighted his black face that it was a marvel to see.

Another of Jeb's expensive habits was smoking cigarettes. He would not touch the cheaper native reefers, but demanded a specific American brand.

I have seen the Super make the air a blue haze at the end of the month when the bills came around. Jeb, the rascal, seemed to understand; and for a few evenings he seemingly would examine each chit, scrutinizing every item like a bank auditor.

Nothing delighted Jeb more than to sit at a table with a carousing bunch of engineers off duty for the week-end. Jokes (somewhat "green," as the natives would say) apparently threw Jeb into semi-hysteria. He would hold his sides and rock with glee at the conclusion of a story. One cynical engineer once made a state-

Illustrated by Charles Chickering

ment that Jeb was a damned hypocrite, that he didn't understand a word of English. He would test him.

Almost everyone knows the old gag about what one sees when looking down a dog's throat and seeing the seat of his pants. Well, this particular evening an engineer propounded the question. Jeb looked up, his black eyes glistening with glee, making an obvious attempt to appear intelligent. By prearrangement, none of the group around the table appeared to know the answer. The engineer then announced loudly: "Why, you see the seat of his trousers!" Jeb instantly let out a roar and clutched his sides, just as if he saw the very clever point of a very clever story. The engineer disgustedly reached over and slapped poor Jeb out of the chair. One could see by the shamed expression on Jeb's face that he knew he had been caught four-flushing. Sheepishly he ambled to the window, clambered out on the telephone wire and swung himself home. It was a week or more before he showed up again in the clubroom.

Not long after that, Jeb became hilariously drunk one Saturday night, started across to his shack via the telephone wire, missed his hold and fell. His head struck a rock and he died an hour later. No tropical tramp ever had a better burial, nor more genuine mourners at his grave.

And if you think that is the result of imbibing too freely with old Jeb, check up on the story. Ask any of the old-timers who roamed the seething trails.

BACK to my troop on the beach: I was now really making friends. Two of the creatures especially beguiled me; sweethearts they were. The young male I had named Mono and the female Monita. Old Patron watched this budding romance with a jaundiced eye. It was a clear case of jealousy. Monita was endowed with feminine charms—very self-conscious and shy; and love kept her from being rowdy.

I had brought with me, as trade stock for the Caribs, several bottles of "five-and-ten" perfumes, extremely fragrant. One day I removed the glass stopper from a bottle and motioned to Monita. Old Patron was looking on from a nearby tree. He squalled with rage. Mono, the lover, however, looked on with a friendly eye. Mono and I had an understanding and sympathy between us of which we were both conscious.

Monita delicately descended the tree and clasped the bottle. She sniffed with all the delight of a subdeb touching Guerlain's most ethereal scents. She clutched the bottle closely and sprang for a low-hanging branch. Old Patron raced to meet her. She met him tooth and nail, fighting for her feminine right—that perfume, the symbol of Eros.

I WAS never able to locate where she kept that precious perfume hidden; most likely it was well secreted in the hollow of a tree. Many times, when the breeze blew down some jungle path, I could detect her presence before I saw her. It was clear that she was the envy of the others of her sex.

After the incident of the perfume, Mono and I established a firmer basis of friendship. He seemed truly to appreciate the gift of the perfume to Monita. I gave him a little mirror, and later on I saw Monita with it.

Mono reached such a point of fraternalism that he would swing down from the trees, cross the short distance of beach to my door, and squat just in front of it, peering within and scratching himself as an indication of friendliness. A small louselike parasite abounds where those of Mono's kind gather. A large part of the time of these monkeys is spent in searching their arms and legs in quest of these pests.

Later on, when Mono and I came to be more trusting, I would sit with him outside my door, and run a short stick through his hair in search of the creatures. Mono would also pretend to find them in the hair of my hands and arms, and would snap and pop the imaginary pests with delighted chuckles. From this I learned that it is politeness in the monkey world to reciprocate attentions of this kind by at least pretending to find *haematopina.*

Before starting in with the coconut business, I had suffered severely from malaria down in Belize. I was again feeling the effects of fever. Quinine was helping little. One night a heavy mist rolled in from the jungle. With the dawn I was hot with fever, and the strength was burned from me. I could barely move. My throat was parched and dry. I could not reach water in the large *olla* suspended from the cross beam of my shelter. My nearest human neighbors were the Caribs, thirty miles up the beach.

I must have lapsed into delirium. I remembered dawn only dimly. I heard my troop. Old Patron was screaming maledictions because his sugar was not beneath the tree. A perfect bedlam broke loose. Coconuts, broken branches, fronds, rained down upon the thatched roof, amid fiendish shouts. In my fever, with the red glare of the rising sun through the interstices of the house, I felt that I must be in Avernus, with imps prodding me with tridents. Suddenly, in a twinkling, there was utter quiet outside. Possibly I had moaned.

Then I vaguely heard a shrill scolding, followed by quick leaping and thrashing through the branches. I heard the light palm-leaf door of my shelter move to one side, and an infinitely sad and wistful little face peered at me. Monita!

I stared in agony. With a low whimper, she ran to the side of my couch, uttering soft "tcheks!" The little cool black paw touched my face. She glanced around, espied the wet surface of the *olla.* Jumping upward, she caught on to the sides of the large clay bowl, dipping her hands into the water. She leaped again to the couch, letting water drip into my parched mouth. Outside I could hear the excited chatter of Patron. Once he came to the door and peered in. Monita hurled a clothes-brush at him.

I remember, hours later it seemed, that Monita and Mono were chattering excitedly by the entrance. I must have lapsed again, then. When I awoke, Monita sat rigidly by the door, listening. I blinked. Suddenly she leaped toward the door and was gone. By the slanting sun, I saw it was mid-afternoon. Perhaps a quarter of an hour later a band of Indians down the beach from Honduras stopped by the house. Later I remember being in a *cayuco,* and Indians paddling rapidly. . . .

I regained consciousness in the American Hospital at Quirigua. The good Scotch Dr. McPhail informed me that a group of Indians had brought me in some three weeks before, just about gone with blackwater fever. He laughingly mentioned that the Indians told him that a band of monkeys had met them miles down the beach, and by their excited chattering and gesticulations had led them to my house.

In my heart I know that without the cooling water, patiently carried by the little monkey, the fever would have burned out my life hours before the Indians arrived. It wasn't the imaginings of blackwater fever, I knew.

I believe these jungle folks talk and understand. The late Professor Richard L. Garner, who devoted the greater part of a long life classifying the speech-sounds of monkeys, could easily distinguish more than a hundred simian words.

THERE are several authenticated cases of jungle-native human babies being kidnaped and raised by mother monkeys who had lost their young. There was a young chap employed by the American Lumber Company at Bragman's Bluff on the Nicaraguan coast who appeared to be able to converse fluently with the monkeys there. There was a story that he had been stolen from a hammock by a grieving mother monkey when he was a babe a few weeks old. I don't know, but it is believable.

The manager of the company informed me that an expedition from an Eastern university stopped by Bragman's Bluff *en route* to Chiriqui, Panama, to hear this young man talk with his simian friends. The party of scientists accompanied him into the jungles, blindfolded him, and propounded questions which he in turn was to ask the monkeys. Apparently they were answered correctly.

However, it is hard to convince scientists. Back at camp, the leader of the party brought out a phonographic recording device, and requested the young man to ask certain questions which would be recorded in simian idioms. A score of his questions were recorded, such as, "Where are bananas?" "Where is water?" "Where does the sun rise?" and other simple queries.

On the following day two of the scientists went alone into the jungle with the record and playing device. Upon encountering a band of monkeys, they played the record. According to the manager of the lumber camp, the experiment was a complete success. By following the monkey band, the two scientists were led to water and food, and to houses where men lived, in answer to the recorded questions.

The devotion and loyalty of these little people of the trees is beyond question. Their affection and love are unswerving. A close friend of mine lived in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, and her constant companion was an aged female monkey. This little simian lady had perfect table manners, brushed her teeth regularly after each meal, insisted on a daily shower, and slept in pajamas nightly. When my friend died at last of advanced years, the monkey who had been her companion for two decades was inconsolable. She died from grief, her arms tightly around the body of her dead mistress. They were buried side by side. . . .

One is slow to recuperate from blackwater fever. It was seven weeks before I could return to my coconut concession. Details had been completed during my illness, and the work had been carried forward rapidly. Many natives had been brought to the lonely beach, employed to install a copra plant and lay a portable industrial railway.

On landing from the boat at the new pier in front of where my lonely work shelter had been, I saw that all was changed. Native houses now dotted the beach. No monkeys chattered in the trees. I felt a distinct lack of welcome; there was a queer sadness in my heart.

Halfway to the houses, I heard a shrill screaming and chattering. Awkwardly across the sands rushed Monita, closely followed by Mono. Monita threw herself at me, clutching me tightly. Mono grasped me tightly around the knees. Both squatted with me, chattering in low tones, their voices registering modulations of scolding as they indicated the native houses. I was still thin and weak. Mono pinched my cheeks, uttering "tcheks!"

Monita smelled to high heaven of the "five-and-ten" fragrance. I firmly believe she had saved it for the occasion, and upon seeing me land at the beach, had dashed the remaining perfume upon herself before running to meet me.

FROM the native overseer I learned that some of the Honduran laborers had been killing monkeys for food. Monkey meat is prized by the mountaineers of Honduras. I now realized why so few monkeys were on hand to welcome me. Monita and Mono had stayed, in hiding, waiting. It somehow got me. I called all the laborers together and warned them under penalty that no monkeys were to be molested or killed. We made our own laws on the concession; and the penalty I named was a harsh one.

Because of the unsympathetic natives, Mono and Monita remained less and less around the camp, for

they feared for their lives. They had not been around for nearly a month, when one day I was far back in the jungle to investigate some old sugar machinery, abandoned a century or so before by the Spaniards. A shot rang out to my right. I heard a scream—and a body hurtling down through the branches. My heart pounded as I ran to a little clearing.

Lying there, groaning piteously, was little Monita, blood gushing from her breast. A slithering noise, and Mono ran to her side. Her eyes met his, shocked and sick with despair.

Even though dying, she tried to be beautiful in the eyes of Mono, who wept piteously. To the last she endeavored to conceal the blood, to hide the ugliness which is death. She looked at me, her eyes glazing, an appeal for help to keep the darkness away. She did not want to die, now! So much undone, in her little world. She whispered weakly to Mono. Two jungle souls spoke in communion, and hers took flight.

Perhaps Mono did not have the philosophy we humans have in meeting the inevitable. At last he gathered his dead one in his arms, and with a mournful farewell glance at me, he swung to the dim airways of the jungle, bearing with sad dignity that which had been his treasure.

Curious facts about playing-cards—which have changed a lot in the long history of their development.

Satan's

Illustrated by Peter Wells

FOR more than five hundred years playing-cards have been subjected to scathing denunciations by watchdogs of public morality. Often temporarily repulsed, and never without attackers, the little pasteboards have been highly successful at the art of infiltration.

Something of their grip upon modern society is shown by the fact that, every day of every year, the cash register of the United States Treasury rings up more than twenty thousand dollars in playing-card taxes.

Just when and where card games originated, no one knows with certainty. In 1423, St. Bernardino of Siena preached a famous sermon in which he voiced the conviction that they were invented by the devil himself. But the good monk was prejudiced. Unbiased students attribute the invention to Oriental chess addicts. Finding it difficult to carry chess boards and men on journeys, it is thought that they developed cards as a substitute. Early decks were made up of 78 cards divided into four suits of 14 cards each, plus 22 extra trumps!

Moorish conquerors of Spain probably introduced the pasteboards into Europe. But they made little headway until 1393. In that year, Charles VI of France commissioned Jacquemin Gringonneur to paint and gild three packs for His Majesty's use. Weary of dice, the idle courtiers seized upon the novel game as a new means of indulging their passion for gambling. The King soon became insane, and in spite of hints that the cards were responsible for his condition, the number of players increased rapidly.

Spanish devotees, meanwhile, were applying their ingenuity to the problem of speeding up the Arabian game. The number of cards was reduced to fifty-two, and the old emblems discarded. In the Oriental game, the four suits stood for the seasons of the year, and were represented by a rose for spring, trefoil for summer, acorn for autumn, and cup for winter.

Some unknown genius hit upon the idea of basing the four suits upon the recognized grades of society: the ecclesiastics, or *chori;* the soldiers, or *spada* (swords); the merchants, represented by coins, or *dineros;* and the peasants, who were symbolized by *basta,* or clubs.

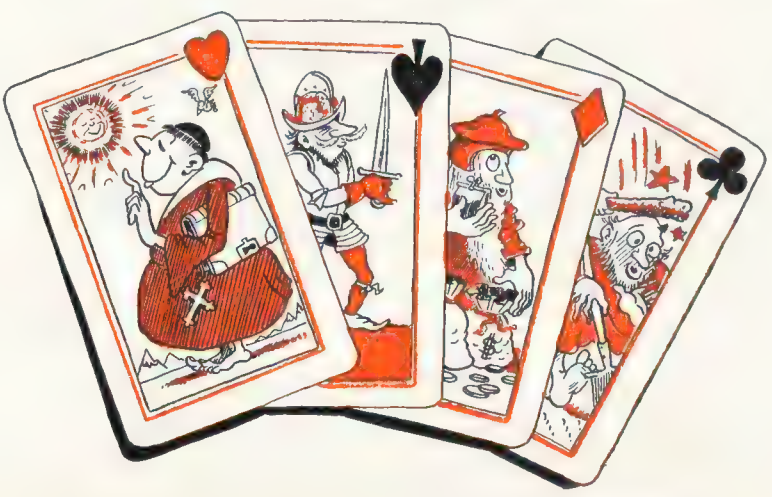
At no time did "spades" refer to agricultural instruments; the term is an English corruption of the Spanish *espada* (swords). And because the *dineros,* or coins representing the merchant class, were square, ignorance of the origin of the symbol led later generations to call it a "diamond." Since the French designated clergymen as *cœurs* (hearts), the suit representing this group in society came to be known as "hearts." "Clubs" persisted as a symbolic representation of the laboring class.

Face-cards had formerly been King, Knight, and Knave. Women occupied a low place in Oriental society, and males saw no reason for including even one feminine card in the deck. But gallant Latins further modified the Saracen game by changing the Knight to Queen. By the middle of the Fifteenth Century, the deck had assumed its present form.

Popularity of the pasteboards had increased to the point that workmen neglected their jobs in order to play. In France, a royal edict was issued, prohibiting the laboring class from playing except on Sundays and holidays.

Even the clergy were infected with the popular enthusiasm, and ecclesiastical authorities were forced to hush up more than one scandal. Monks neglected their prayers to shuffle cards, and at least one friar not only gambled away the church funds entrusted to his care, but also lost his rosary when he offered it as a final stake.

A notorious Scottish earl and his companions turned Glamis Castle



Grades of Society

by WEBB GARRISON

Calling Cards

Moorish Conquerors

into the first all-night card parlor. Admonished by a pious clergyman to mend their ways, they swore that they would "continue card-playing to the end of the world." According to a contemporary account, their blasphemy caused the room in which they sat to sink immediately below the castle. And there, it is said, the gamblers play still—their voices and the shuffling of cards being distinctly audible on stormy nights!

SPORADIC crusades, notably in Nuremberg and Bologna, resulted in public bonfires in which cards were burned by the cart-load. But "Satan's Calling-Cards," as they were termed, could not be stamped out. It is said that Columbus and his crew even played on their momentous voyage. This is quite likely, since the pastime was popular in the Spanish army and navy.

Engraving not having been invented, the earliest cards were painted by hand. Kings and emperors had their private cardmakers, who spent their lives designing and producing elaborate decks. Early in the Fifteenth Century, the making of cards by a crude stencil process had become an important industry. Germany and France had the bulk of the trade, but as early as 1463 English manufacturers succeeded in persuading Parliament to forbid the importation of pasteboards made by foreign competitors.

Since paper was very scarce, odd cards were used for many purposes. Short notes and invitations were frequently penned on them. Ladies improvised visiting-cards by writing their names on the backs of playing-cards. Military commands were transmitted on them. Even yet, the nine of diamonds is known as the "Curse of Scotland" because the Duke of Cumberland wrote the order for the Massacre of Glencoe on this particular card.

Some scholars now deny the story, but there is a strong tradition that the most famous hymn in the English language owes its existence to a playing-card. According to the story, Augustus Toplady took shelter from a storm in the cleft of a huge rock near Somerset, England. While waiting for the fury to abate, he conceived an idea for a hymn. His memory being poor, he would have lost the inspiration for "Rock of Ages" had he not committed many of its phrases to a card which he happened to have in his pocket.

Early in their invasion of Europe, efforts were made to divert the little pasteboards from the gambling table to more noble ends. In 1650, a pack was invented with the purpose of using it to teach English grammar. It was followed by a whole series of *"The Scholar's Scientific Cards."* The manufacturer proposed to "make it pleasant and painless to learn reading, spelling, grammar, writing, arithmetic, and various arts and sciences."

A few years later there appeared a deck designed to instruct the housewife: *"The Genteel Housekeeper's Pastime; or the Mode of Carving at Table represented in a Pack of Playing-Cards, by which any one of Ordinary Capacity may learn how to Carve, in Mode, all the most usual Dishes of Flesh, Fish, Fowl, and Baked Meats, with the several Sauces and Garnishes proper to Every Dish of Meat."*

And in 1720, the august English Government distributed decks, the backs of which were imprinted with caricatures and warning verses. By this method, they attempted to laugh out of existence the disastrous commercial enterprise known to history as "The South Sea Bubble."

These noteworthy efforts were followed in modern times by such exciting versions as "Authors" and "Bible Rummy." But playing-cards steadfastly refused to become important in-

Notorious Scotchmen

struments of instruction and uplift, and instead held firmly to their functions of passing time and of redistributing wealth.

So earnest were English players that a London inventor produced an elaborate shuffling and dealing machine. A pack was placed in a box, the handle turned, and when a spring was pressed the sides fell open and the contraption disgorged four piles of 13 cards each.

The automatic shuffler never became popular, but modern card-widowers may take some comfort in reflecting that their plight is not new. Four centuries ago, women players were so avid that the Duke of Savoy found it necessary to issue a proclamation restraining them from playing for stakes other than pins and needles!

Anything faintly resembling a cent-a-point game would have been hailed with ridicule until recent times. Men refused to play unless the stakes were high; frequently the ownership of a vast estate hinged upon the turn of a single card.

THERE was a brief period about 1850 when American players protested against royalty and demanded cards bearing Presidents instead of kings, heroines of Greek mythology rather than queens, and Indian chieftains instead of knaves.

But the fad soon passed. Though new games have been developed and old ones refined, the pasteboards themselves differ very little from those used by Charles VII of France. The fifty-two cards in the modern deck still symbolize the weeks of the year, and the four suits stand for as many distinct social groups. All four kings are still left-handed. And, at least in theory, the queens bear some faint resemblance to the women in whose likeness they were first painted: Marie of Anjou (wife of Charles VII); Isabeau, his mother; Agnes Sorel, his mistress, and Joan of Arc.

The Genteel Housekeeper's Pastime

The MEDAL

RAFFLES JACKSON sat hunched under the pay-load of his years. He'd be twenty-eight next birthday, and nine years behind a roaring engine whirling a broadsword prop had built up a packet of fear. Nine years bucking the weather, the defiance of the enemy and the weight of a medal could only advance the inevitable.

"We've got to get him out of here, Jackson," Hike Freeman kept saying over and over. "This boy can go out fast unless we get him where his leg can be taken care of. Don't tell me you got weather."

Raffles peered over the cup of coffee. He had once looked the legendary character—tall and slim with the grace of a cavalier; with a haunting smile and a pair of hands any faro dealer would have wagered his soul for. That was the Raffles Jackson who had marched up confidently for a D.S.O.

"It's only broken?" Jackson asked, and dubbed his butt in the heavy saucer. "It can wait a few hours, can't it?"

The whiff of gangrene floated across from the camp cot. Outside, the snow streaked a harsh design across the window, and the high scream of the storm came through the chinks with the drift.

"That's all it was—at first," the super muttered, "but the guy tried to crawl out and tell us about Jasper, who was still in the shaft. He ruptured a big vein. Now it's gangrened. We got a diagnosis from Yellowknife, and they say we got to get him out."

"Not in this," Jackson said, and jerked a thumb at the window. "We're nearly three hundred miles north of Yellowknife."

He had pawned his D.S.O. medal to buy some work-shoes—but still they expected him to fly out an injured man through this blizzard.

by ARCH WHITEHOUSE

Illustrated by CLAYTON KNIGHT

"You did it once for a guy named Morgan," Hike was saying slowly.

"Morgan?" Raffles stiffened in his chair. "Morgan was different. That was a war and you did things—for patriotism." He wondered how Hike knew about Morgan.

"You mean they don't hand out medals today."

Jackson's hand moved like a mongoose. He grabbed Hike's shoulder and squeezed. "You want to know where that D.S.O. is right this minute?"

Hike eased out of Raffles' grip. He suddenly looked tired. "I know where it is," he said.

"I pawned it for five bucks in a hockshop in Hamilton," Jackson said with icy ferocity. "I don't believe I earned that medal, but it got me a pair of gloves and some work-shoes. I needed them to get a job up here."

Hike was trembling as he went over to a locker. He came back with a small oblong box. "Morgan happened to be looking at a camera in that hockshop," he said and slid the box across the table. "He thought you would like to have it again."

Jackson paled. He reached out slowly and raised the lid. "Morgan?" he said. "The same Chunky Morgan?"

"It's your gong, isn't it? Your name is engraved on the back. There's no mistake about it, is there?"

"Why did he send it to you?"

"Morgan's like that. He didn't want you to know who found it, but he wanted you to have it again. Thought you'd feel bad if you knew where he'd found it. Asked me to slip it into your gear—when no one was looking."

"Morgan," Raffles repeated: "would he be any relation?"

"The boss' son. That's how we learned about Raffles Jackson. That's why we took you off a drill gang, and put you flying the company ship."

"Thanks," Raffles said. "Guess it was more than I deserved. That's the way I felt the morning I got the medal," he reminisced, and stared back to the glory of that day. "He wore wings too, and from what I hear, he earned them. He talked our language, and I guess I felt good just being the same breed, having the same wings. It wasn't until later that I began to wonder—"

"I guess you earned it," Hike said. "Morgan told me all about it in his letter."

On the operations map Berlin was more than thirteen degrees east. Fully four hundred miles of flight across enemy territory. What an introduction! The Big-B the first trip. They wanted a target pranged and Cloudy Joe, the Met-bloke, didn't have too much to offer. It would be six-tenths over the city and they'd have to gamble on what it would be over the field when they got back. But they had to go. Raffles had all his decisions made for him.

Six hours of agony over hostile territory. Raffles was a rookie compared to the others but they all wore the same nervous smile. His navigator, Ted, had five operational trips in his book. Alf, the wireless operator, was on his second tour and racking up his twenty-seventh raid.

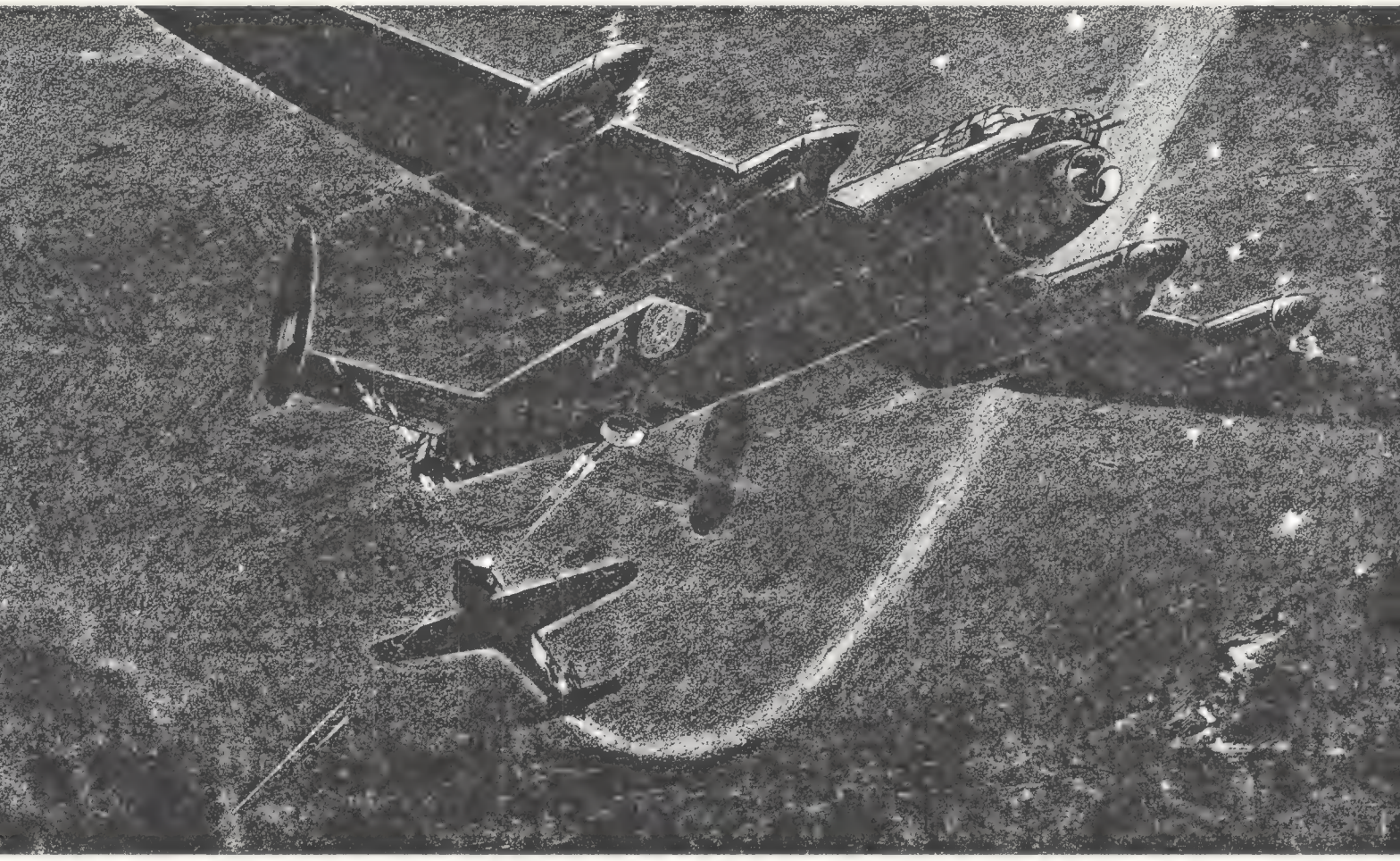
Johnny, his flight engineer, had clerked in a grocery store before the war. "Port outer . . . port inner . . . Starboard outer . . . starboard inner!" Johnny sang and the four engines roused the space within the sandbagged walls of the dispersal bay. The rest came in on the inter-com test. Medical students, gas-pump attendants, high-school boys and chaps who had worked in radio stations. They all came through and Raffles took her away and raced her down the runway. Below, the landscape of Albion faded in the purple of the twilight. Soon it would be dark and they'd be on cats' eyes—except for the stars.

For a few minutes after they were airborne Raffles enjoyed his first sense of relaxation but it was as artificial as the sedative of a drug and as the bleak line of enemy coast appeared ahead, the cold tentacles of apprehension gripped his middle. The weight of command responsibility knotted his vitals and left him nauseated.

"Howzit, Navigator?" he called to justify his post.

"Fine, Skip. Track and timing correct."

The engines continued their contented purr but the intercom was quiet and Raffles knew they were all



A line of scarlet wasps spat past. He put the Lanc into a howling dive.

tense and intent on their small sphere of influence. A fighter flare spat somewhere above daubing a dull yellow blob against the velvet sky. The man named Morgan spoke suddenly and laced the crew into a single element.

"Corkscrew—starboard—go!"

Raffles sat there stunned with his responsibility of reacting to a gunner's decision. It was seconds before instinct responded. A line of scarlet wasps spat past the outboard engines before he put the Lanc into a howling dive. The line of wasps elevated and he sat staring while the air-speed built up on the clock and threatened to slash past the safety mark. Wide-eyed and quaking, he dragged the stick back, clawed frantically for height and went into an uneven evasive action.

"What about it?" he screamed over the inter-com. "What about it?"

"Okay, Skipper," Morgan reported. "He's broken off. Resume course."

That's all the tail-gunner said but Ted, the navigator, caught something in the tone of the response. "You all right, Morgan?" he broke in.

"All right. Just a . . . a splinter off the traversing cylinder. Carry on, Sergeant-Major," Morgan added foolishly.

Jackson sat holding his course with hands that seemed to have lost the sense of feel. He tried to make sense out of Morgan's words. He wondered who Morgan was. There had been so little time to get acquainted before he'd clicked for a spot thirteen degrees east. Too many things to remember. Too many things to be told. Too many men aboard a Lanc to take it at once.

"I'll take a look," Ted said from somewhere aft.

ALL that had happened in less than a minute and but for Morgan's tireless search they could have been down by now: A flame-blackened hulk spread across enemy landscape and seven men scattered somewhere—if they were lucky and able to get clear and take to the silk.

"What's it like, Ted?" Raffles called after minutes of silent agony.

A high-pitched appeal came over the inter-com. The others stiffened and wondered what the new pilot would do.

"Carry on, Skip!" Morgan's voice appealed. "I'm all right. Ted wants you to turn back—or prang an alternate target. I've never been to Berlin, Skip. I'll pad up and stick it out."

"Send Ted back here," Raffles said and marveled at his composure.

Fighter flares were blossoming out above. Amber streaks swabbed through the inky blackness and the others maintained their vigil and search, straining their eyes to pierce the void—paying the premium on the best insurance an air crew can buy.

"He's had a wicked packet," the navigator said when he came up and stood in the alley. "A slug through his knee that came out well up his thigh." The look in Ted's eyes charged Raffles with failure to react quick enough. "He won't last the raid out, I'm afraid."

"He said he wants to go on."

Ted nodded and automatically glanced at the compass. "He's moving back and trying to pack it himself. The turret's out."

"If he gets it packed—"

"How can he know what he's saying?" Ted muttered.

Raffles felt his courage oozing away "What would you do? You've had a bookful of this."

"You were briefed for Berlin. That's what you're supposed to do. Now you got a gunner who may not live to get back. If any new decision is made you're the one to make it."

"The kid wants to go to Berlin. If we make it and hit the target it will be something."

"It might be enough," Ted agreed. "That might be all he'd need."

"Pilot to tail-gunner," spoke Raffles. "Pack that leg and make yourself comfortable. We're going through."

Three times on the way to Berlin they nipped off Jerry fighter attacks before they started. Raffles was on his toes with every warning. Every time they foxed one he felt as if he had swilled down a cup of hot strong coffee.

The clock ticked off the hours and minutes to "H" time and the gray scar of the target spread across the pattern of a huddled city below. Jackson's eyes tingled with the strain of staring at the fluorescent green of the instrument panel. It all melded with the red that meant a wounded tail-gunner, until the sky ahead arched up with a ruddp glow that announced that the Pathfinder boys had broken through to lay their marker flares.

The bombardier was saying: "Left, Skipper, left! Steady, boy. Little more left . . . Steady. Hold her there, boy! She's coming in lovely. Now right—just a bit. Bomb doors open! . . . Hold her steady, boy. Coming in nice . . . Steady . . . Steady . . . *BOMBS GONE!*"

They ran on over the target and the camera indicator on the panel winked on—then off. That was the picture. Bomb doors closed.

THAT's the way it was the first time and that's how it would be again and again. Someone telling Raffles when to go, what to do and when to come back. Even a wounded tail-gunner was making decisions for him.

As they turned back, Jackson could see the target area. The glow brought out in scraggy detail the outline of other bombers lobbing their eggs into the flame-dotted pattern below. In turn enemy gunners were pushing up the flak, wildly trying to blast the bombers off their mark. The shells burst in spasmodic pin-points of blinding light but the Lancs plunged on. A white finger of searchlight probed the sky. Jackson was thankful the night sky was so very big and so very dark. The hours crawled on and they settled in their physical numbness to await the first early fringe of sunshine that would edge the friendly coast ahead with its aura of gold.

That's what they looked for, but the weather had beaten them to it.

"Looks bad, Skip," the radioman said over the inter-com. "They're ordering everyone to emergency fields. Anywhere south of the Thames, they say."

"What about that gunner?" Jackson asked. "What's on that gunner?"

The mid-upper man reported: "He's sleeping. He'll be okay if we can get him down safe. The packing is holding wizard."

Alf said: "I hope you're lucky, Skip."

"Get on Channel B and see what they have to offer. That's what they're there for."

They worked the special band and got a few choices but when they found a tower it was zero-zero and the needles on the tanks were tilting dangerously low. There had to be somewhere open soon.

"Come on, Alf, get me a strip," Jackson pleaded. "The whole damned Island can't be blanketed in."

"There's a hundred other guys screaming for the same thing," the radioman responded. "I'll keep working, Skip."

Another twenty weary minutes and Alf said: "You're right over our own base again. They say it's no good."

"Anyone else get in?" Jackson inquired.

"Only the gunners. They're jumping all over the country."

"What about getting our chaps out?" Raffles said to Ted.

"That tail-gunner won't be able to jump—with that leg. No telling where he'd hit and that packing wouldn't hold. He'd bleed to death before they found him."

JACKSON eased back on the throttles. "He'd like to get down and be able to say he'd been to Berlin. Work that tower and see if they can talk us down."

"You'd better ask the boys what *they* want to do," Ted said and stared into the nothingness ahead.

This was as near a decision as Jackson ever reached. He took up the intercom and gave them a chance to step out.

"I'm taking her in," he said but the voice did not sound like Jackson's. "Anyone can step out now, but I'm taking that gunner in . . . somehow."

"Go ahead, Skip," they chanted. "We'll ride her down with you."

"You've bought it, brother," Ted said. "Now what?"

Jackson talked to his tower and said he was coming in and what about it? They gave him all they had to work with and said it was risky. They gave him a course that offered the best approach and set out the stall for an emergency landing. A kid sitting before a radarscope was making the decisions now. A downy-cheeked kid who munched on a bully-beef sandwich while he talked. Figures and bearings. Altitude and barometric pressures between gulps of brackish tea, and Jackson sat it out and put the flaps and wheels down.

"You're approaching the strip, sir," the kid was saying. "We can't see you, but we're doing our best. They'll be sending up flares at the end of the runway if you can spot any of them . . . Best of luck, sir."

No one spoke. They just huddled and sat where they belonged. The mid-upper gunner had dropped down and was kneeling over the wounded man ready to shield him when they hit.

Jackson listened to the low wail of the slip-stream as it sang through the flaps. He took another look at the switches and hoped he'd be able to snap them if he had to. Ted tightened his belt and crossed his arms across his chest. "If you get away with this—" he said over and over.

"Got to get that kid in," Jackson started to say, and felt his hackles rise.

"If you ever get in a spot like this again don't push your luck."

That was when the first flare placed a dull pink splotch in the murk ahead of them. Jackson let out a high-pitched cry and nosed down steeper. He tried to remember the figures on a signal flare. Was it thirty feet or three hundred?

"It'll never happen twice," Ted was saying. "No man has any right to that much luck."

Another flare spat out beside their wing-tip and Jackson closed his eyes and eased her down more. "I'm glad I took the chance," he heard himself muttering. "That kid had a right to get back—so he could talk about going to Berlin."

"Get it back! Get it back!" Ted was making the decisions now. "Get it back, Skip . . . Back! Back! Back!"

The damp concrete strip was dead under them now. The grass was gray-blue beside it. There was a flash of scarlet and they saw the wing pass dangerously close to the top of an ambulance that was racing along with them. They caught up with another before the wheels hit the first time. The olios retched and screamed and the concrete strip seemed to do

That was the Raffles Jackson who had marched up for his D.S.O.

a snake dance ahead but Jackson treadled his pedals and followed her until he was able to apply the brakes and pull up in time to swing into the taxi track and tool her to the emergency hardstand.

"You'll live to be a million," Ted said and fingered the sweat from his forehead. "It's guys like you who'll win this war—one of these days."

No one else was able to say anything. They just sat there and waited until the ambulances came up screeching and skidding across the oil-parched turf. No one said anything until they were easing young Morgan out the hatch.

That's when the tail-gunner said: "Thanks, Skipper. Mighty good effort."

"Let's say it's something a man has to live up to," Raffles said now, and looked across the room with compassion in his eyes. "How soon can you get him ready to ship out?"

"I don't know," Hike said with new concern. The super's fear enlarged and his spirit diminished because for the first time he realized that Raffles had won a medal. Won a medal—and met a King. "I don't like making a decision like this."

"I'll make the decision. He can't stay here—he could lose that leg." A new glow rose within Raffles Jackson.

"Maybe I should call Yellowknife again."

"Sure!" taunted Raffles. "Maybe you should call God and see how long that kid can take that poison."

"You're the doctor," Hike said and reached for the box. "What about this?"

"Keep it. I'll be back."

Raffles worked into his parka and snow-pacs while Hike called in a time clerk and the equipment foreman. They rigged a stretcher and wrapped several wide web straps around the bundle and stood off listening, with pain in their eyes, to the delirious mutterings of the young engineer.

"Give him another shot before you bring him out," Raffles said. "We'll be upstairs quite a while. I don't want him running wild up there."

"Maybe I should go along with you," Hike suggested, but there was no conviction in his words. "Just in case. . . ."

"You stay here. I don't want to be responsible for any more than is necessary."

Hike looked relieved and went back to the stretcher. "Yeh. I can get in touch with Yellowknife again and have them all set. That might help."

"Ten—fifteen minutes," Raffles said and thumped for the door. "See what you can get on the weather in that area."

Head down, he stumbled through the drifts for the open shed that housed the Norseman. The cold knifed at his nostrils and the wind pressure strangled him. A tractor came chugging through the blinding sheen of snow, fighting to keep the roadway clear. Raffles clambered to one side, yelled at the operator and climbed aboard.

"Give me a runway from the shed to the lake," he yelled under the man's earflaps. "About two cuts wide. We got to get to Yellowknife."

The snow-fringed eyes of the tractor man stared and the machine halted in its turn. "You crazy?" he yelled. "This is a whaler!"

"Can't keep up forever."

"Neither can you," the tractor man said and yanked a lever back with savage insistence.

In the shed, Raffles pondered on the fueling problem. He could take enough to give him a range of something over 400 miles. It was about 280 from the mine at Hunter Bay to Yellowknife. If it was a matter of sitting out the weather full tankage would be a big help. Fifteen minutes might make a lot of difference. On the other hand he wanted to get off with as light a load as possible. He had to get off here before he could get to Yellowknife.

The whole show was a gamble, and he decided to play it close to his chest. He settled for something over 300 miles and hoped the storm hammering at his tail would give him some leeway at the other end.

Outside, the blizzard continued its defiant howl. The tractor cleared the apron outside and then went rattling into the white-penciled hatching and disappeared. The scream of the storm drowned out the *flob-flob* of the fuel as it washed into the wing-root tanks. Raffles never heard the truck back into the shed.

"I called Yellowknife," Hike yelled up from the cabin step. "They don't like it at all."

"Who does?"

"They don't see how you can make it. Completely closed in."

"Let me worry about getting there," Raffles yelled, and screwed the cap on. "Getting down is something else."

"They won't be able to help you. They couldn't even talk you in—through this; they'll never hear you."

"You tell that sawbones to have his table ready. I'll be there."

"I wish I'd never started any of this," Hike said while Jackson clambered down.

They eased the stretcher through the port entry and lashed it to the tie-down lugs while Raffles checked the heater system.

"Here's your Met report," Hike muttered.

The tractor returned through the blinding fury and wheeled around. Hike bent a cable from the drawbar to the legs of the landing-gear and they yanked the Norseman clear of the frozen ground. When Raffles kicked in the starter the big Wasp began to churn with spasmodic surges of grudging power. The tractor went clattering back down the narrow pathway and as it disappeared the Wasp eased into a smoother song of hissing delivery. While she warmed up, the pilot spread a map on the co-pilot's seat, checked the meteorological report and then strapped up.

"Tell them to give me two hours," he yelled down from his office window. "And Hike—I'll be back for my gong."

"You're really earning it—this time," Hike Freeman said under his breath.

It had to be a cross-wind take-off, but once he got her out over Hunter Bay, he would have a chance of fighting it; until he was clear of the tractor-hewn runway, however, there would be bushels of woe.

He waved to Hike and eased the throttle up the box. The Norseman trembled and tried to get her tail up but Raffles rocked her back and forth on her skids until she eased free again and began to move. Once clear of the shelter of the shed walls, the raging blast struck blindly and tried to spin her into the snowbank. Raffles rammed the rudder over and blasted it with a storm of prop-wash until she came around. Already the crystal snow was filling in the angles of his windscreen and a faint film of condensation brushed an opaque filter across the glass. He spun the wiper, lined up the narrow lane ahead and breathed a prayer for a few seconds of clearance.

"Come on, baby!" he scolded as she held her course but failed to gather the required speed. "Let's have it, baby!"

The undersides of the skids cleared, and she moved smoother. The tractor suddenly appeared ahead and Raffles saw it wheel sharply and plow into the snowbank. The Norseman plunged on drunkenly and Raffles pedaled fast to keep her to the straight and narrow. He shot past a high drift, and a skulking gust struck and the ship tried to bury herself in the snowbank. One skid ran up, and the opposite wing-tip hacked through the drift on the other side.

The prop bit with savage fury now and hauled the cabin job clear. She came out, hit on both skis and everything bounced, jangled and clattered. Raffles wondered about the man back there on the stretcher.

There was an eon of uncertainty as the Norseman floundered on, but gradually the thumping below eased off and she clawed her way into the teeth of the storm.

There was no turning back now.

Raffles tooled her into the fury and climbed into the headwind. He tried to remember the altitude of the range across the bay at Hornby and wondered whether he would clear. The white nothingness ahead blotted out everything. What was below he had no idea. Maybe a mine town. Maybe a spread of shaft clearings. Maybe a radio mast. Maybe a broken pattern of mining shacks. All kinds of obstacles to add to his festering scar of fear.

He wiped sweat and saw he had made 900 feet and he risked a turn south, trusting he was well over Great Bear where he could chance a wind slap that might put him into a sideslip. She came around creaking and groaning through the gantlet of the storm. Below, he could see nothing but the racing tracery of the snow pattern, and when the course figures finally appeared in his compass window, he breathed a deep sigh of gratification and held her in a steady climb.

"Nice kid, that Chunky Morgan," he muttered and tried to retrieve a memory of the tail-gunner's face, but all his mental probings could unearth were the kid's words when they eased him out on that stretcher.

"Thanks, Skipper. Mighty good effort!"

The Norseman found a less turbulent lane at 3500 feet. The storm still hammered at his tail but up here it was less gusty and he was able to hold to something faintly resembling a horizon. There was no sign of clearing but the storm pattern was less disturbed. It was like looking directly through a mosquito net. The view was diffused and bleak but it no longer swirled and bewildered. He heard someone talking business from Port Radium and the answer from Norman Wells at the head of the tractor trail on the Mackenzie. He tried to work it on his radio compass but the effort only assured him he was in the Port Radium area—somewhere.

"You tell that sawbones to have his table ready. I'll be there."

By now Raffles knew he was on his own. It was all there in his own hands and reflexes. All he had learned in nine years was what he had to work with. His instincts, touch, feel and ability to weigh the factors involved. No co-pilot, no navigator, no seatmate to argue or encourage. All he had here was a stick and a throttle. Just that and a heel-tap of courage to down the acid draft of fear.

He got a break twenty minutes later, and through a momentary easing he caught the saw-toothed pattern he hoped was Conjuror Bay.

He went on instruments again, applying the figures he hoped represented his ground speed against the known units of time. The clock, a precision mechanism, relied only on a coil of spring steel. The air-speed needle, buffeted and agitated by the pranks of the outside elements, jerked with its frenzied efforts to offer an accurate reading. There was no knowing whether it was 130 or 150 m.p.h. The difference of twenty miles in each hour could mean an error of forty miles either side of Yellowknife. He could pile up amid the raked spruce sentries guarding Fort Rae or wander blindly over the frozen vastness of Great Slave. It was just a matter of applying the figures offered by a coiled spring of known tension against vacillating reports stemming from a blizzard's treacherous breath.

A new quality of fear crept into the anguish-tense frame of Raffles Jackson. A cold that no heater system could penetrate plated his back and shoulders with a chrome-hard shell that defied normal muscular reaction. It crept slowly up the cords of his neck and forced constricting claws into the base of his skull. A dull pain slowed his thought processes and interfered with the items of intelligence his orderly mind usually marshaled, and there was no trust in any of it.

The pressure of concern forced his wavering thoughts back over the years and a new fear produced a vague program of comparisons. Before, he'd been afraid of the physical threats of the flight to Yellowknife. The cold, the blizzard and the probability of a hideous crash; a flame and concussion finish, that had been his nightmare for years on end. All that was dulled now and the new fear thumped at his belly with the prospects of failure. The icy dread that he would never live up to the accepted concept of "meritorious or distinguished service before the enemy" recited aloud at his investiture.

"A Berlin show was a milk-run to this," he argued, spacing his words to keep pace with the lag of his fuzzy recollections. "I had four engines, and six chums who were on the ball. They sent out Pathfinders to show us where to dump the stuff. I mucked up a tail-gunner's instructions, and he stopped a packet. We get a weather hazard on the way back, and I decide to be a hero; and because some other kid was alert and did his job, I got away with it. They talked me in

as far as they could, and when I'm blind and spot-on, they put up flares and practically shoot me down. For that I got the D.S.O. It could have been a D.C.M." (District Court-Martial) "and at that I'd have been lucky."

The alchemy of retribution began to dissolve the cold plating across his back and he turned to pencil a check mark on the map. By now he should be entering the upper wedge of North Arm. That's where he had to be, no matter what gamin tricks the air-speed indicator winked at him.

"'*For meritorious and distinguished service in the face of the enemy,*'" he recited again, and the words formed an acidulous block in his throat, and he had to swallow hard and take his medicine. The panel dials danced, and his eyes glistened with unshed tears, but he downed his debt, sour and unpalatable as it was, and the tears were freed and the tension went off so he could smile. He turned and looked at the recumbent figure on the lashed-down stretcher.

"Rest easy, chum. I'll get you in."

The storm - battered Norseman hunched her slim shoulders, rammed her knife wings through the storm and plunged on. The wiper spun and brushed away the accumulation of crystal particles and left a circular sheen to form a satellite of the prop-cut disk out front. She bucked and stumbled before the high Arctic rollers pounding astern. The struggle produced a drum-fire of outraged metal, spine-grating creaks and discordant tympany, and Raffles Jackson had to stifle a scream of anguished protest.

"You're on your own, Jackson," he said in slow cadence. "You're at 3500 feet in a roaring blizzard, and you might be twenty miles from Yellowknife. You can talk to them, and they can talk to you; but they'll never see you in this. You really set yourself a problem. Maybe you're twenty miles short of Yellowknife, but you could be twenty miles beyond. There's something to figure, chum. There's no kid working a radar set down there this time. They won't hear you if you go over, and they won't call you back. You got gas to stick around awhile, but after that—you're on your own."

He checked again, taking the figures on the panel for what they were worth. He figured his barometric pressure and made a fine adjustment on the altimeter. Beyond that, it was all in the seat of his pants and his belief in his own capabilities. He wondered now whether there was anything in that "meritorious and distinguished service" gag.

Well, that's what the man in London had said. That's what it said on the paper that was given him with the medal.

Raffles wanted to know. He had to know now. The answer was somewhere down there in that snow.

He snapped his transmitting switch and called Yellowknife.

"*Jackson out of Hunter Bay,*" he reported, and marveled at the quality of his courage. "*I'm coming in with a stretcher case. Jackson letting down from thirty-five hundred feet for Yellowknife. I've got an emergency stretcher case . . . Over.*"

The operator at Yellowknife took a look at the storm before he replied. "*Maybe you are, Jackson. If you make it, you ought to get a medal.*"

"*Stand by. I'm coming in.*"

He eased back on the throttle and glanced over his shoulder. "This is where we go in on a little of that meritorious and distinguished service, chum," he said.

The creaking Norseman swung drunkenly through the buffeting of the storm. The frame groaned and protested at the beating, but Raffles sat it out and checked with the panel again. It was all there in the dials if the figures the dials were offering were true. If he'd held spot-on, Yellowknife was down there. If they'd put a Sno-Go on the runway, there'd be something to work on. There had to be a patch of something to show through that blanketing white. There had to be one side of every shed roof that would be bare of snow. There had to be smooth spots that had been brushed clear. There could be a faint plume of smoke—a flagpole, a tower.

All the things that had once formed the bulk of his fears could now be markers down his glide path to safety. Who was it said: "Fear can be a stimulus to overcome all difficulties?" Raffles couldn't remember but for the first time the logic of the statement enveloped him, and from within it all pealed a high song of triumph. That from Raffles, who couldn't carry a note, but he knew he could take an emergency stretcher case in. . . .

The Norseman seemed to hiss and retract her wings as they slipped past a radio tower. Instead of quaking, Raffles roared his glee and glanced back to see which way the antenna was strung.

Spot-on! He was slipping in as true as the edge of a T-square. The runway had to be dead ahead now. He could start loosening his belt, he was that certain. He lowered the flaps, and she seemed to hold her breath as the brake surfaces took over. There was plenty of room once he saw the high yellow cab of the Sno-Go plowing a clearance, and the song was still pealing when the skis slapped down and added a ceremonial roll to the chorale of his conquest.

"*Thanks, Skipper. Mighty good effort!*"

Arms and

Deborah Sampson fought alongside the men in our Revolutionary Army and concealed the secret of her sex even when seriously wounded.

by FAIRFAX DOWNEY

Illustrated by Charles B. Falls

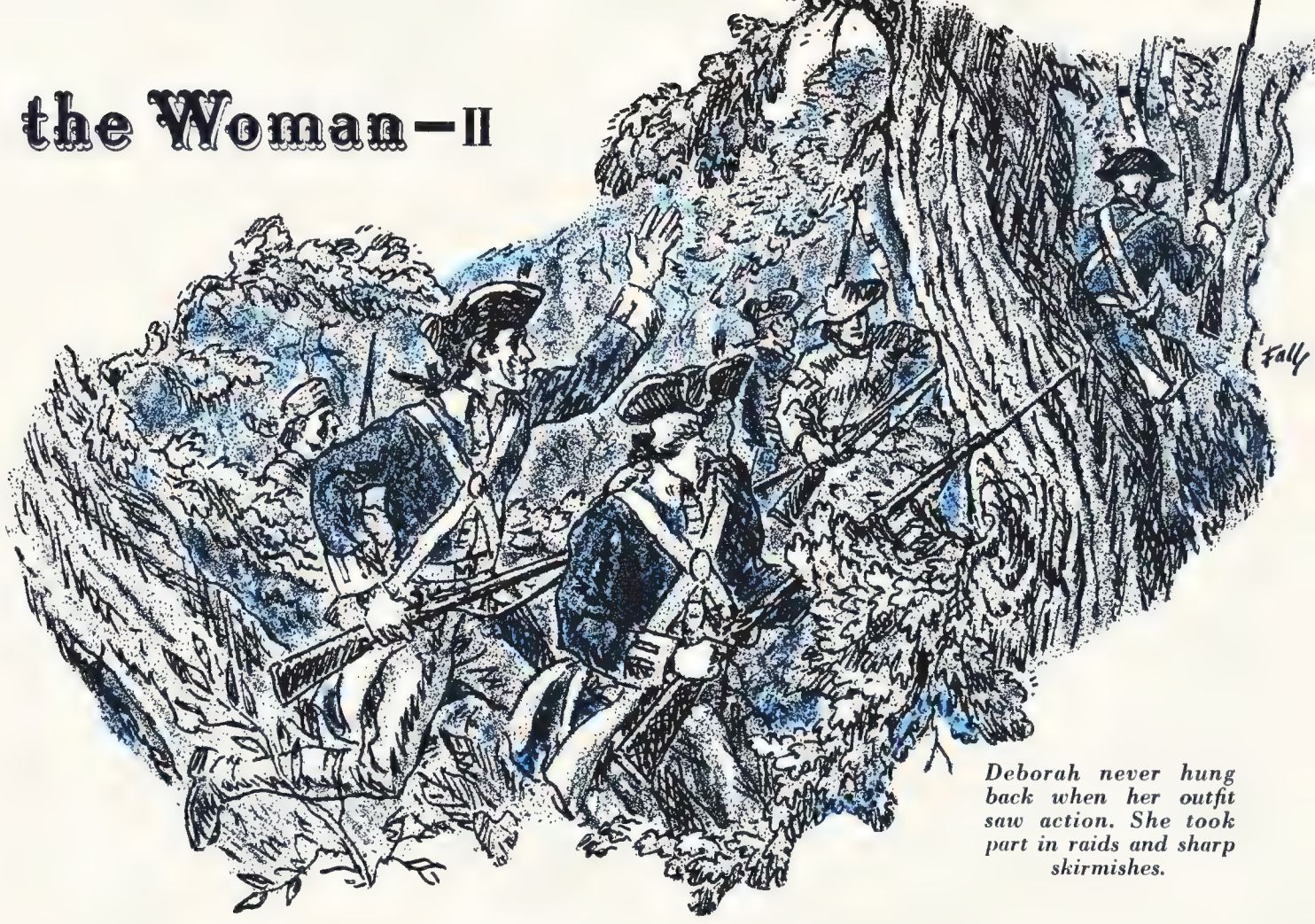
To the farm-bred girl passing by, those men in the tavern seemed to be having a grand time. They bellowed with laughter and burst into song, while they tossed off mugs of flip, stonewall, and small beer. Men had all the fun, she reflected.

Might clothes make the man? Deborah Sampson wondered. She was tall for a woman—five feet, seven and one-half inches—and there was nothing delicately feminine about her features. Donning a borrowed suit, she stepped around to the tavern and soon she was roistering with the best of them. It beat milking cows and the school-teaching she was doing after picking up her own education. Certainly this was a man's world, and Deborah, remaining in masculine disguise, ran away into it.

She could find no job and went broke. Since it was 1778, and there was a war on, a logical step presented itself to one who was done with being a woman and inconsistent. Deb enlisted in the Continental Army under the name of Robert Shurtleff and was assigned to the Fourth Massachusetts Regiment. General Washington had acquired a woman soldier of the line, though neither he nor any of her comrades would become aware of it for some time. Just twenty, straight and strong, Deborah looked like another of the many beardless boys in the ranks.

Yet at the very outset she almost gave herself away. It was not her figure, for she had bound her breasts with a tight band, nor was it her blooming countenance, needing no shaving. Deb's company nicknamed her "Smock-face" and "Molly," and let it go at that. Betrayal nearly came because her uniform, like Army garb throughout the ages, was a terrible fit. Unlike the average trooper, helpless without a tailor in the outfit, Deb did such a skillful job of alteration that she aroused instant suspicion. Quick as a flash, she explained that she had been made to learn sewing as a boy, since there were no girls in the

the Woman—II



Deborah never hung back when her outfit saw action. She took part in raids and sharp skirmishes.

family. Then, neat in blue regimentals with white facings, she strapped on knapsack and cartridge box, shouldered her musket and marched off to war.

Stationed at West Point, she drilled, took guard duty and other details and flirted with local girls. Comrades considered her a proper soldier, except that she never got drunk and always shied away from wrestling-matches. Once she was put on the spot when an order sent her regiment to take a needed bath in the Hudson, but Deborah managed to slip off upstream by herself for her ablutions. "Whilst the Hudson swelled with the multitude of masculine bodies, a beautiful rivulet answered every purpose of bathing a more delicate form," a chronicler modestly declares and adds that there were "no peepers to play Elders to her Susannah."

But Deborah never hung back when her outfit saw action. She took part in raids and sharp skirmishes against the Tories of the vicinity. In one fight she received a saber slash in the foot—only a light wound, but in another a bullet smashed into her thigh. Though she told her company she was as good as dead and to leave her be, they carried her back to a kindly French surgeon. When he tried to attend her, she succeeded in putting him off and hid herself away. She suffered agonies until her wound healed, and she would carry that bullet the rest of her life, but the girl had grit and preferred to stand the pain rather than reveal her sex and be discharged.

Back to duty, she saw some Indian service up Ticonderoga way and later was detailed to act as General Patterson's orderly in Philadelphia. It was there that a beautiful belle from Baltimore fell in love with the trim and military young trooper at headquarters. "Robert" enjoyed the situation no end, until the affair became so fervent it got out of hand, whereupon "he" was compelled to go absent for a time and undeceive his sweetheart with a letter signed "Your Own Sex"—undoubtedly as upsetting a jilting as any girl ever got.

The remarkable masquerade of a year and a half now came to a conclusion. Deborah fell ill of a fever and was taken unconscious to the hospital. On a nurse's reporting her dead, the doctor felt for her heart and encountered the banded bosom. He told Deb's secret to the General, and they agreed the situation was "truly theatrical," which it was, as well as apt to become scandalous if it were allowed to continue. When she recovered, Deb—in woman's clothes again—was sent back to her regiment, which failed to recognize her. She was honorably discharged as a "faithful and gallant soldier who at the same time preserved the virtue and chastity of her sex unsuspected and unblemished."

Resigned to being a female, Deborah married and bore three children to Benjamin Gannett, rated "a good sort, though of small force in business." Figuratively Deborah still wore the trousers. She had marched off and fought a war while her husband, though of military age, stayed home on the farm. As times grew hard and her old wound troubled her, she applied for a pension as the disabled veteran that she was. Successive sums were granted her by Congress, prompted by her former officers and her friend, Paul Revere. She supplemented the grants by her own efforts, going on a number of lecture tours. The speech she delivered was ghost-written guff full of flowery sentiments, but it was worth far more than the price of admission (twenty-five cents, one-half for children) to watch Deborah in full uniform slapping her musket in performing as snappy a manual of arms as the Continental Army ever had produced.

Like other old soldiers who "never die but only fade away," Deborah, when an aged woman, answered the last roll-call. A street in her home town of Sharon, Mass., is named after her, and visitors honor her grave.

Captain Porter and

Men of America—IV

SOMETIMES a ship—a seemingly very ordinary ship—finds its proper master. That was the way it was with the *Essex*. She was small. Other captains found her wayward and cranky, and her guns were all wrong. But David Porter was happy to have her. The U. S. Navy didn't have many frigates in 1812, and Porter was a very junior captain. He knew he was lucky to have the command of any frigate—even a small and cranky one.

From the beginning, the combination of Porter and the *Essex* worked out well. They had had a good summer cruise together. Now, with October turning into November, they slipped clear of Delaware Bay, headed for bigger things. Porter was sure of it. Before they sailed he wrote:

"In two or three days, I sail on a long, a very long cruise. . . ."

There were others in the crew who had ideas of their own about Porter's intentions. Their letters were to go ashore with the pilot; Porter sampled a few and found them perilously close to guessing the truth. That wouldn't do, so he had the lot destroyed.

The forecastle muttered, but Porter let it pass—until they were safely past the rough weather off Cape Hatteras. Then he had the ship's company piped aft—officers, petty officers, seamen, and marines—all 318 of them.

From the waist of the ship they saw a slight-built man frowning down at them. They knew he was Massachusetts-born and Baltimore-raised, that he had gone to sea with his father at sixteen, had twice been pressed and had twice escaped the British, and at seventeen was first mate of a schooner in the West Indies trade. He had come into the Navy in 1798 during the French troubles, and had successively fought the French, the Haitian picaroons, the Barbary pirates and the Louisiana buccaneers. Now he was thirty-two, long-nosed—"a nose for trouble," they said—and had a high regard for himself, a pair of sharp black eyes, and an actor's love of the dramatic. The quarterdeck made a perfect stage for his histrionics.

It was a long cruise ahead, he said; the ship was crowded and future provisioning doubtful. So it would be half-rations of bread and a half-gallon of fresh water daily for all hands. The ship would be fumigated each morning in all spaces below decks by vinegar poured over a redhot shot. At night, one candle would have to do the work of two. And then to ease off these hard lines, he issued a general pardon for all offenses committed to date. But he added:

"The first man who must be punished, will get three dozen lashes."

The boatswain's pipe skirled, and the crew fell to. Where were they going? That was for Porter to know. A singular man, David Porter; and the *Essex* was a singular ship.

Bright just now with new canvas, fresh paint, and much holystoning, she looked considerably better than she really was. When the good people of Salem, Massachusetts, had built her thirteen years before, their patriotism had been greater than their pocketbooks, and she had emerged not much more than a corvette. But she was optimistically overgunned and called a frigate. A succession of commanders experimented with her armament; and now, rated for thirty-two guns and carrying forty-six, she was heavy with short-ranged thirty-two-pound carronades, twenty-four of them in her main-deck battery and sixteen more on her spar deck above. Of long twelves she had only six, two on the main deck and four on the spar. Porter did not like this preponderance of heavy shot and short barrels.

"Was this ship," he wrote prophetically, "disabled in her rigging in the early part of an engagement, a ship much inferior to her in sailing and in force, armed with long guns, could take position beyond the reach of our carronades, and cut us to pieces without our being able to do her any injury."

PORTER could not change his guns, but he could adapt his tactics. If he could not depend on his broadsides, then he must close and board. So each day the off-watch fell to for cutlass and pistol drill, while the marines and topmen practiced with their muskets and grenades. Any man lacking a proper sailor's dirk got one forged from a file by the ship's armorer.

David Farragut, Porter's foster son, who in a greater war would damn the torpedoes at Mobile Bay, was aboard as a midshipman. He says that for years later the best shots and swordsmen in the Navy were the *Essex*-trained men.

Porter counted heavily on one other thing: the *Essex*, properly handled, was fast. Faster, he hoped, than any bob-tailed Englishman who might be sent to catch her.

the *Essex*

As a midshipman he was aboard the *Constellation* when she captured the *Insurgente* in our war with France. Here follows the story of his epic cruise in the Pacific during the War of 1812. Years later he resigned and for three years was commander-in-chief of the Mexican Navy! As described in a following article, he was our minister to Turkey at his death in 1843.

by MAJOR EDWIN SIMMONS, U.S.M.C.

But now, with British colors flying as slight disguise, the *Essex* was headed for the South Atlantic and rendezvous with Commodore William Bainbridge in the *Constitution* at Port Praya in the Cape Verde islands.

On the 23rd of November they *"were honoured by a visit from the gods of the ocean, accompanied by Amphitrite and a numerous retinue of imps, barbers, & c. & c."* The landlubbers in the crew were duly initiated in the age-old rites of the sea, although Neptune and his suite got too drunk to stand and had to be replaced with lesser godships.

They spoke an occasional Portuguese brig, and on the 27th rounded the east point of Port Praya. The Portuguese governor was most polite, parading his scarecrow garrison—the poor devils hadn't been paid in ten years. Salutes were fired, and Porter took on fresh water and tropical fruits, and the crew bought turkeys, sheep, chickens, pigs, goats, and monkeys until the *Essex* could have passed for Noah's ark. The two greatest evils of the place were the bad rum and the heat—to both of which the watering parties were unavoidably exposed. They came back aboard with coconuts emptied of their milk and filled with rum, and there was a high time below decks. But of the *Constitution* in company with the *Hornet,* there was no indication. Failing Port Praya, Bainbridge was to meet them at Fernando de Noronha; so that course was set.

While on this stretch, early on the afternoon of December 12, the *Essex* spied a possible prize, a British brig hurrying home. They crowded canvas, and by nine o'clock that night were within musket-shot. Lieutenant John Gamble's Marines sent a volley of musket balls rattling across her decks; an Englishman was killed, and the brig struck her colors. The capture was His Majesty's packet *Nocton,* ten guns and fifty-five thousand dollars in gold aboard. Porter put a prize crew in her and sent her to the States with a recommendation that the Navy make her a cruiser.

Two days later, gun-ports closed, and disguised as an honest British merchantman, the *Essex* stood off Fernando de Noronha, almost astraddle the equator. John Downes, the frigate's first lieutenant, who spoke Portuguese, and like his captain was something of an actor, went ashore in plain clothes with orders to describe the *Essex* as the *Fanny* of London, sixty days out and Rio-bound.

He came back with a basket of fruit from the governor, and the news that the British ships *Acasta,* forty-four guns, and *Morgiana,* twenty guns, had cleared the port just two weeks before bound for India, and that the captain of the *Acasta* had left a letter with the governor for Sir James Yeo of His Majesty's frigate *Southampton.*

Porter had never heard of the *Acasta* and *Morgiana,* but Sir James was an old rival, so he sent Downes back ashore with a gift of cheese and ale for the governor, and a promise to deliver the letter.

The cheese did the trick. Downes got the letter. It made no sense at all, but it was addressed *"My dear Mediterranean Friend"* and it ended: *"I should be happy to meet and converse on our old affairs of captivity; recollect our secret in those times."*

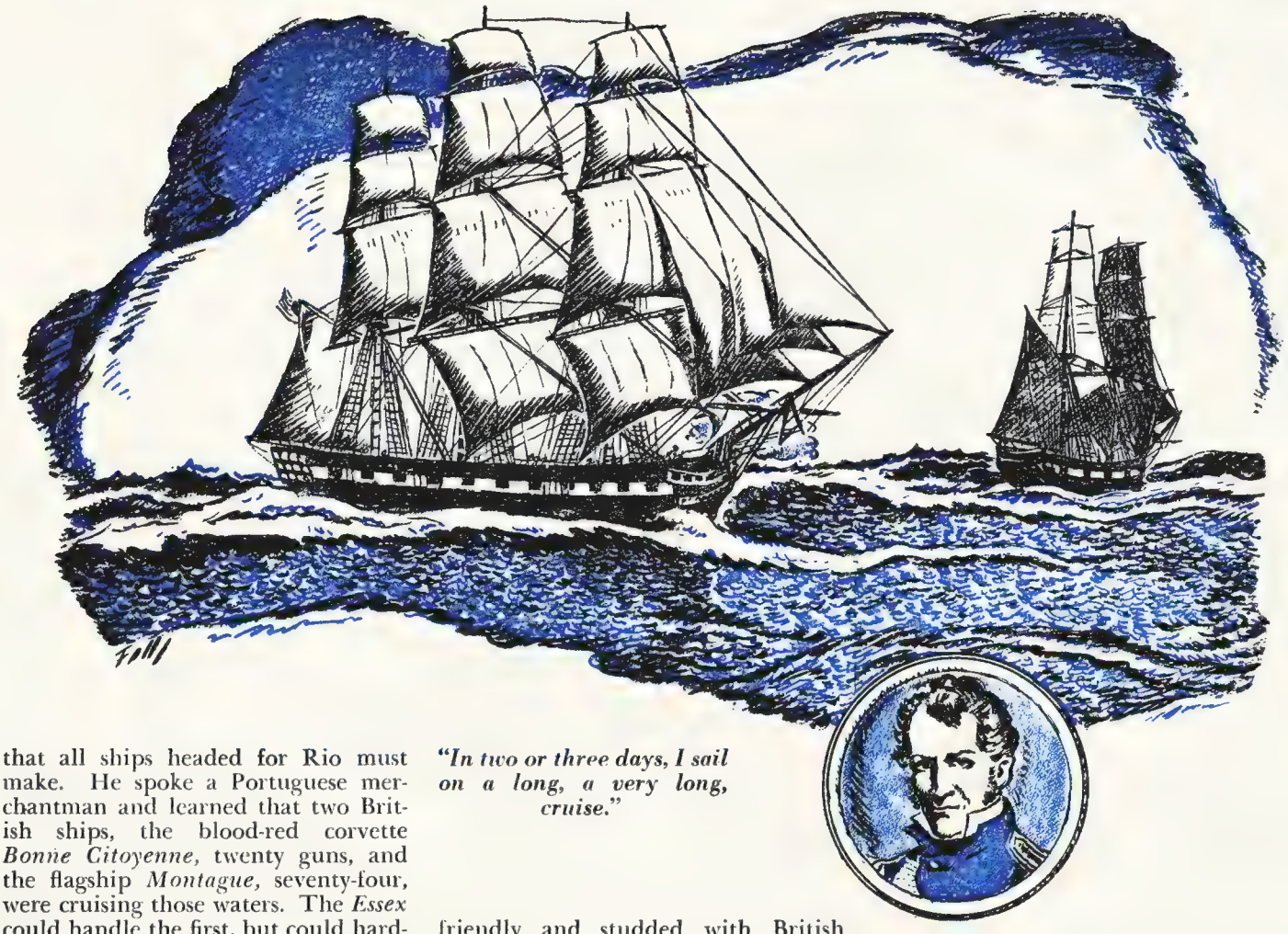
That was a bold clue. Porter had been with Bainbridge in 1803 in the *Philadelphia* when she went aground in Tripoli harbor. They had been prisoners together for a year and a half, and on occasion, had passed notes written in lemon juice. His dark face intent, Porter held the letter over a lantern. The heat made the secret writing stand out:

"I am bound off St. Salvadore, thence off Cape Frio, where I intend to cruise until the first of January. Go off Cape Frio, to the northward of Rio Janeiro, and keep a lookout for me."

That was Bainbridge right enough, and the "British" ships were the *Constitution* and *Hornet,* playing the same game as the *Essex!*

Through blistering heat that started the pitch in the *Essex's* seams, Porter headed for Frio, the landfall

Illustrated by CHARLES B. FALLS



"In two or three days, I sail on a long, a very long, cruise."

that all ships headed for Rio must make. He spoke a Portuguese merchantman and learned that two British ships, the blood-red corvette *Bonne Citoyenne,* twenty guns, and the flagship *Montague,* seventy-four, were cruising those waters. The *Essex* could handle the first, but could hardly hazard a meeting with the second.

On Christmas Day the *Essex* raised the Cape; but no Bainbridge. Lingering off the entrance to Rio harbor, Porter took a British schooner, *Elizabeth.* Her master was glibly misleading, but seemed overly anxious that Porter avoid San Salvador. So, naturally, Porter pressed on all sail and made for that island.

But the winds were obstinate, and they made St. Catherine's instead. There was more parading of flea-bitten garrisons while the *Essex* reprovisioned at villainous prices—"a dollar for a dozen of rotten eggs." Ashore, Porter learned that the *Montague* had taken an eleven-gun American sloop—the *Hornet,* without a doubt. Not daring to risk a blockade, he put his ship to sea.

THE picture was not bright. The crew was on two-thirds rations and one-half bread, but most of all they complained the grog was thin. Porter said drink it or leave it; in fifteen minutes the grog tub would be upset in the scuppers.

The *Constitution* was God knew where (actually she had fought and burned the *Java* and was making for home and repairs). The *Hornet* was almost certainly captured. The purser's list of supplies was appallingly short. The coast of Brazil was unfriendly and studded with British men-of-war.

Porter called his lieutenants aft and gave them the alternatives: Stay here and risk starvation or capture, or sail north and risk capture or blockade in a home port. Downes, on cue, asked if the Captain had another plan.

Yes, Porter had a plan, a plan advanced to the Secretary of the Navy the year before, and pigeonholed as fantastic. Now he would see what his officers thought of it.

He would take the *Essex* south, around the Horn, and into the Pacific. In two or three months, with fair sailing, they would reach Concepción on the coast of Chile. Then, reprovisioned, they would make the *Essex* mistress of the Pacific.

Someone faltered that it was a bad season to be doubling the Horn. Porter fixed him with cold black eyes and said it was as good a time as any. The rest agreed. Porter bade them good morning, and they went stumbling out of the cabin. . . .

By the end of January the *Essex* was in chilly latitudes. Porter made a quarterdeck speech, told the crew they were going to double the Horn and promised them the double lure of prize money and the girls of the Sandwich Islands. The men needed new shoes; there were none aboard. Porter issued an extra pair of wool stockings to all hands instead. Piece by piece the canvas was stowed along with the lighter yards. Extra shrouds and preventer-braces were rigged.

February brought in a gale that lasted a week. Sleet lashed through the ropes. The seas burst the rudder-coat and flooded the wardroom. A man could not stand on deck without a handhold.

The gale gave way to a high wind and rain-squalls. Porter optimistically broke out more canvas, and then the weather got worse, and he was soon down to double-reefed topsails and foresail. Breakers were sighted. Porter set a jib to bring her about and keep her off the rocks. The wind tore away the jib, but the bow came around and she managed to claw off.

The weather cleared a bit; they ran down the indented coast of Tierra del Fuego, and on February 18th Porter reckoned their position at latitude 60 degrees south—time to make westing.

The Cape, grim and foreboding, was deceptively calm. Black clouds rolled down, and then the Horn weather broke in all its fury. The wind went up to hurricane intensity. The sticks threatened to tear out of her, and they shortened first to storm sails and then to bare poles.

Porter began to have his doubts. He knew he had stretched his orders, that his search for Bainbridge had not been as strenuous as it might have

been. Some might even say he had avoided Bainbridge in order to try his own mad scheme. There would be none to justify him if he left the bones of the *Essex* on the headlands of the Cape.

A series of brief violent squalls began. In the face of them Porter could do nothing but turn and run, beating back in the lull between gusts. The air was cold, the spray cutting like a whip; the ship was taking water, and their position was quite unknown.

PROVISIONS, except salted ones, were gone. The barrels of rice and peas were reduced to a maggoty dust. The ship's bread was edible but shot with weevils. Nothing could be cooked, for the galley fires were doused. Raw rats became a delicacy. The water, by luck, was still good.

"Nothing," said Porter, "is to be issued from the storerooms without my personal approval." Rum kept the crew alive.

On February 24 he got a shot at the moon and found his longitude 80 degrees West. The frigate turned northward with a fair wind abeam. Porter called the men aft to give thanks to the Lord.

The last day of February dawned bright, with smooth water. Porter ordered the light yards broken out, but before they could be set, the worst blow of all was on them.

The pumps, choked with loose shingle-ballast, could hardly keep up with the leaky seams. Below decks, gun tubs slammed about. The worn rigging threatened to give way. A sea burst in the gun-ports; both boats on the quarters were stove in; and the spare spars went over the side. Porter was crippled by three severe falls and could not go on deck. A Marine died. The men were despondent, praying, and oddly enough, making wills. Then, after three days, the storm passed.

The weather turned calm and cloudy. The *Essex* put in at Mocha Island, a smugglers' hideaway. The half-famished crew went ashore with muskets to glut themselves on wild hogs and horseflesh, and in the hunting, a gunner's mate was killed.

Shortly thereafter the *Essex,* storm damage somewhat repaired, rounded the point of Angels outside Valparaiso. Porter's ubiquitous messenger Downes went ashore primed with a story of the *Essex's* dire distress calculated to offset the expected hostile Spanish reception. It was not necessary; there had been a revolution the year before, engineered by the family Carreras.

Porter was welcomed by the governor, a former naval lieutenant, who promised every assistance to a sister republic. The reception wound up with a ball for the Americans. Porter found the two hundred or so ladies attending, gracious and beautiful, but overdaubed with paint, and their dances were shocking. Among his junior officers there were no such complaints.

To repay their courtesy, he invited the dons and their ladies out to an afternoon aboard the *Essex*. A thirty-two-gun frigate was sighted, and the *Essex* unceremoniously put to sea, leaving the ladies standing on the dock. But there was no fight; the ship was Portuguese.

An American whaler came in with news: There were many British and American whalers on the ocean, most of the former well-armed privateers preying on the latter with the help of the Hispano-Peruvian presidency.

Porter decided to adjust this.

THE wrinkles in their bellies smoothed out by the round of routs, balls, and banquets, they weighed anchor again; this time for the whaling grounds. They spoke to another American whaler, took her under escort, and before the evening was out, overtook a half-disguised man-of-war. Porter ran the British colors to his peak and fired a shot to leeward. The stranger answered with a ball across the *Essex's* bow. Porter fired two more rounds and then roared through his speaking-trumpet for the captain to come aboard and apologize for firing on the British flag.

The captain was ill; he sent his lieutenant. The ship was the *Neyreda,* Peruvian privateer, it was explained. They were grieved just now because the British letter-of-marque *Nimrod* had relieved them of their legitimate prizes, the American whalers *Barclay* and *Walker.*

Porter was content to pretend to be an Englishman until he learned the *Neyreda* had twenty-three American prisoners in her hold. Then he exploded.

He stripped the hapless *Neyreda* down to her topsails and courses. Her light sails, guns, small arms and shot (solid copper, these) were tumbled over the side. Then Porter sent her into Lima with empty holds as a warning to the viceroy to mend his manners.

That done, Porter set off to find the *Nimrod.* No luck. He built a false poop on the *Essex* and disguised her now as a Spanish merchantman. Toward the end of March, while cruising across the sea roads leading to Callao, he spied three ships making for the harbor. The first he cut out; it was the *Barclay.* The second he supposed to be the *Nimrod,* but it turned out to be a Spanish brig, and as such not fair game. Before the day was done they overtook another Spanisher and pumped the captain dry of information.

They reached the Galápagos—nightmarish islands with strange flowers and monstrous tortoises, the last a source of fresh meat better than beef. They wound in and out of the islands, searching out the caves and grottoes, knowing that the whalers must return to their base. Porter drew a chart of the half-known waters, naming one of the best islands for himself, a smaller island for Downes, and a set of rocks (appropriately) for Bainbridge. While the crew feasted on green turtle, chased red-headed lizards, and wrestled sea lions, scientific-minded Downes and Chaplain Adams collected botanical and biological specimens.

Porter awoke one dawn to hear the cry "Sail ho!" echoing throughout the *Essex.* He went on deck to see a large ship bearing west. They overhauled her with ease. It was the whaler *Montezuma;* and her master, Captain Baxter, was quite willing to believe that the *Essex* was also English. He came aboard for an exchange of courtesies, and while he was taking wine in Porter's cabin, a boarding party from the *Essex* was quietly taking possession of his ship and its 1400 barrels of oil.

Baxter refused to believe himself a prisoner.

" 'Tis not in reason," he gasped.

" 'Tis nevertheless the fact," said Porter.

There were two other ships now in sight. The weather fell calm at noon, and the chased were still eight miles ahead. Porter put his small boats over the side; they pulled the eight miles; and before evening Porter had the *Georgiana* and the *Policy.* A good day's work; three ships, cargoes worth half a million dollars, all the stores the *Essex* needed to refit, and provisions for a year's cruising.

HALF the prisoners were Americans—or at least so they said—and were glad enough to sign on under Porter's flag. Porter shifted the *Policy's* guns to the *Georgiana,* the best of the prizes, giving her sixteen in all, put Downes in command, and then made another of his quarterdeck speeches, the essence of which was that they were going to do more cruising and were going to take more prizes.

They continued to beat about the Galápagos, occupying their time with amateur explorations, and setting loose four goats to confound future naturalists. Downes was sent off in the *Georgiana* to search for another island.

Toward the end of May, with Downes still gone, the lookout picked up a strange sail. It was a long chase; but when it was ended, Porter had another prize, the six-gun letter-of-marque *Atlantic.* The captured captain was scarcely aboard before an-

other ship was sighted. The *Essex* crowded on all sail. Night fell and the chase might have got away but a shot between his masts settled him. It was another letter-of-marque, the *Greenwich*—along with her drunken captain.

With so many prizes, Porter was running out of officers to put into them, so he gave the *Greenwich* to Gamble, who was a man of sense although "only a Marine." Porter now had six ships and eighty guns; he decided to take them to Tumbes.

Coming back from paying his official respects ashore, he found that Lieutenant Wilson, the officer of the watch, had tried to match the drunken captive captain of the *Greenwich* drink for drink. There was trouble. Porter had to slap a cocked pistol out of Wilson's hand. With Wilson confined to quarters and under double guard, he was shy one more officer. He sent for Chaplain Adams.

"You are a good chaplain," he told him, "but a better hydrographer. You are now to command a ship."

Even the twelve- and fifteen-year-old midshipmen were made masters of the lesser prizes. Farragut got the *Barclay*—and a leathery boatswain's mate to help him run her.

Downes came in from his independent cruise with two more ships. He had taken three, but he sent the third in to St. Helena to disembarrass himself of prisoners.

Of all the prizes, the *Atlantic* was the best and fastest. Porter put his carpenters aboard to build breastworks, mounted twenty guns in her, and renamed her the *Essex Junior.* Downes was given her command and the *Georgiana* passed to Chaplain Adams.

On July 9th Downes was sent off in his new cruiser to convoy four of the prizes into Valparaiso, sell them, and then return to rendezvous in the Galápagos; if not there, in the Marquesas.

Meanwhile, Porter with the *Essex, Greenwich* (Marine Gamble commanding) and *Georgiana* (Chaplain Adams) would nose some more in the Galápagos. There were signs of fresh British shipping, and late one morning they sighted three sail. The *Essex* took one, the *Charlton,* ten guns, without much trouble, and then turned back to help the *Greenwich,* which was trading broadsides with the second. But Gamble needed no help with his shooting. The second ship struck, and Porter was pleased to find that it was the *Seringapatam,* the most notorious ship in the Pacific, and more of a pirate than anything else. Meanwhile the doughty chaplain had taken the *New Zealander.*

From the prisoners Porter recruited the "Americans" for his depleted crew. "Borrn in New Yorrk before iver I left ould Ireland," swore one. Seventy-five in all signed on; the rest were put aboard the *Charlton,* her guns removed, and paroled to Rio.

Porter indulged his play-acting: his hard-worked carpenters made the *Seringapatam,* with twenty-two guns, look like the *Essex,* while the *Essex* was made to look like something else again. The *Georgiana* was sent home under the command of Wilson, who had redeemed himself in the action with the *Seringapatam.* Two of Porter's honor-touchy lieutenants fought it out with pistols one dawn, and on the third fire twenty-one-year-old John S. Cowan was stretched dead on the alien sands.

Leaving the rest of his fleet in Bank's Bay, Porter took the *Essex* out by herself and caught the letter-of-marque *Sir Andrew Hammond* with her belly full of blubber.

Downes came back from Valparaiso with the news that His Majesty's frigate the thirty-six gun *Phoebe* and the twenty-four-gun sloops *Raccoon* and *Cherub* were in the Pacific with orders to find the *Essex.*

A year had passed since they cleared the Delaware Capes. Porter struck up a balance sheet:

"Value of prizes taken by the Essex *in the Pacific*	*$2,500,000*
Value of American whalers on the coast of Chile and Peru, which would in all probability have been captured had we not arrived	*2,500,000*
Cost of equipping and employing for one year, one frigate, two sloops-of-war, and a store-ship	*250,000*
	$5,250,000
Expenses for the Essex *for one year*	*80,000*
Balance	*$5,170,000*

It was a good year's work. With all their hard sailing, the *Essex* had lost only ten men by accident and disease.

Porter decided to retire discreetly to the Marquesas. This, he told the crew in one of his quarterdeck speeches, would serve two purposes: They would recondition their ships and wait the best season for the run back to the United States; second, it would be a chance for some relaxation and amusement.

The natives were reluctant to believe Porter, even after a Tahitian aboard the *Essex* explained they came in peace. Some bits of iron hoop passed over the side in a bucket did more than diplomacy to establish their good intentions.

The *Essex* had plenty of scrap iron aboard; this, along with whales' teeth, of which there were also plenty, was an acceptable medium of exchange, and soon trading was proceeding briskly. The natives were most amazed to see the goats, sheep and dogs, and were entranced by the Galápagos tortoises. Pigs they understood, but not these strange creatures.

Shortly after anchoring, three white men came out in a boat. Porter did not answer their hails, but went ashore with a port of Marines and met them there. One, tattooed and half-naked, was an English beachcomber named Wilson, and sort of a prime minister to the local chief, Gattenawa. The second was presented as John Maury, U. S. midshipman on leave to do some sandalwood prospecting. The third was a trader named Hunt.

There was a proper palaver. Porter drilled his Marines. The drum and muskets delighted the natives. Porter made some diplomatic overtures to a genuine South Sea Island princess: Piteenie by name, granddaughter to Chief Gattenawa, eighteen years old, light-skinned, and dressed tastefully in tattoos, sea shells, and very little else. His feelings were somewhat rubbed when she turned to the more obvious attentions of a young lieutenant.

In a day or two, old Gattenawa himself, in palm-frond hat and cloth skirt, came down from the hills and paid a state visit to the *Essex.* He was half drunk with *kava,* a scaly old veteran of seventy or so, with an impressive bodyguard dressed in tapa-cloth cloaks, feathers, and twelve-foot spears. He and Porter exchanged names in best Polynesian custom. Then the wily old warrior insisted that his new brother help make war on an inland tribe that had cursed the bones of his mother.

Porter, steering clear of actual hostilities, made a demonstration. The inland tribe was unconvinced, so Porter put Downes ashore with the Marines and the crew of the *Essex Junior.* Downes climbed the hills and shot five men. Never in the history of tribal warfare had there been such casualties. The other tribes stampeded to ally themselves with the Americans and soon Porter could count thirty-one tribes as friendly. There was a great deal of name-exchanging and a great many wives offered, and Porter had to be the essence of tact to avoid acquiring a harem.

He renamed Nukahiva Madison Island, and claimed it for the United States. He built a village of six houses, a rope-walk, and a bakery, and he covered the harbor approaches with a fort made of mud and water casks.

One inland tribe, the Typees, remained unimpressed by the "white lizards." Porter decided on an amphibious attack, covered by the *Essex Junior* and launched from five ship's boats and ten war canoes. The force consisted of thirty-seven Americans

Old Gattenawa himself came down from the hills and insisted that his new brother help make war.

and about five thousand natives—the latter came along to watch, not fight.

The Typees with their slung stones and spears were tougher than Porter thought. Downes crumpled with a broken leg. For a while the American force was down to Porter, Gamble, and the ship's doctor firing from behind one small tree. But the Americans rallied, and carried off their wounded.

The next day, with considerably more respect for the Typees, Porter plunged once again into the jungle, this time with two hundred Americans at his back. Nine miles they marched, and took ten villages in as many battles while their native allies went about with their looting, burning, and destruction of the Typee breadfruit groves. By nightfall the war was over, and a *pax Americana* settled over the island.

Old Gattenawa made Porter *taboo* and introduced him into the tribal mysteries, including a glimpse of the chief god, a four-foot spear wrapped in *tapa* cloth.

More practically, Porter set hogs and goats ashore to improve the island breed, and showed the natives how to plant melons, pumpkins, peas, beans and oranges. Wheat puzzled them until he demonstrated how to grind flour and bake bread.

During all this the refitting of the *Essex* was proceeding. She had been careened, the rats smoked out—1500 dead ones counted—and now she was sweet and ready for the sea again. Six weeks only had been spent on the island—in spite of all that had happened; and now, early in December, Porter was ready to sail with the *Essex* and the *Essex Junior*. Behind he would leave Gamble as island commander with twenty-two men and the *Sir Andrew Hammond, Greenwich,* and *Seringapatam*. The *New Zealander* would be sent off with a cargo of oil for the U. S.

But before the *Essex* could raise her hook, the growls of an incipient mutiny reached Porter. The men had no wish to leave their tropical paradise and dusky sweethearts.

Captain Porter had all hands mustered and faced them on deck with a bared cutlass.

"You who favor weighing anchor at my order, pass to the starboard. You who object, stand fast. March!"

All hands moved to the starboard, but Porter picked out the ringleader with the point of his cutlass. That worthy went over the side and swam for his life. Then with the fiddler sawing away at "The Girl I Left Behind Me," the capstan went around and, according to Farragut, the anchor "fairly flew to the bows."

The voyage began uneventfully enough; they touched at St. Maries,

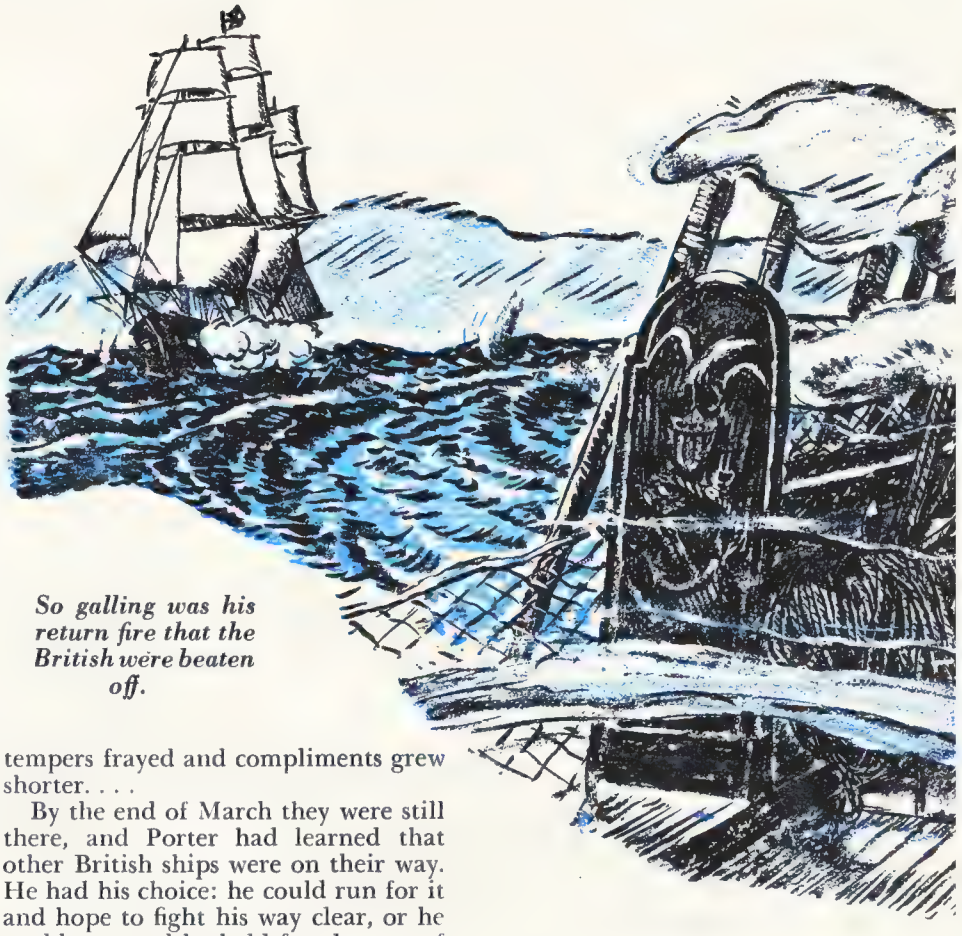
and Concepción, and then on February 3, 1814, Porter took the *Essex* into Valparaiso, leaving the *Essex Junior* outside the harbor to do picket duty. The Chileans repeated their hospitable welcome; Porter decided to repay their courtesy with a ball aboard the *Essex*. He called in the *Essex Junior* to join the fun; she came in and anchored with a full view of the sea. The *Essex* herself was decked out with awnings and full flags.

The dancing continued until midnight. Then Downes went back to his own ship. Aboard the *Essex* they began to undress the ship—and then came a signal from Downes: "Two enemy ships in sight."

Leaving orders for the *Essex* to be cleared for action, Porter had himself rowed to the *Essex Junior*. He and Downes took her out to get a closer look. Frigates, they looked like in the darkness.

Porter was back aboard his own ship by breakfast and found her ready for action: guns run out, decks clear and sanded, and slow matches burning.

The strangers came boiling into the harbor. They were, after a five-month search, the frigate *Phoebe* and sloop *Cherub*. The *Phoebe* swept up to the *Essex* and then luffed so sharply that she stood almost spar to spar with the American frigate. Porter was anchored in neutral waters, but he had no notion of how the British would regard the neutrality of the revolutionary Chileans. The English captain jumped up on the rail and waved his hat in sardonic greeting to Porter. Porter recognized him as Captain James Hillyar, whom he had known on the Mediterranean station.



So galling was his return fire that the British were beaten off.

They inquired politely as to each other's health. Porter promised to board if the *Phoebe* as much as touched an *Essex* rope-yarn; and Hillyar, if he meant mischief, decided against it after eying the *Essex* gunners blowing on their slow matches. Slowly the Britisher fell away, until the wind took her to the eastern side of the harbor. Then she let her hook go down—the *Essex* within range of her long guns, but safe from the American's carronades.

Later that day Porter and Hillyar met ashore at the home of a mutual friend. Over a glass of wine they haggled the terms of the fight. The harbor was neutral: agreed. Porter propositioned that the *Essex* would meet the *Phoebe* alone. No, said Hillyar, the *Phoebe* and *Cherub* would fight together, let Porter use the *Essex Junior* if he liked. But Porter knew that Downes' make-believe warship could not stand against the solid *Cherub*.

So there was no agreement. The four ships stayed in the harbor, and tempers frayed and compliments grew shorter. . . .

By the end of March they were still there, and Porter had learned that other British ships were on their way. He had his choice: he could run for it and hope to fight his way clear, or he could stay and be held for the rest of the war in close blockade.

Porter wasn't one to sit still. The morning of March 28th brought a fresh *pampero* blowing from the south. Very well, they would run for it. With luck they would get clear of the harbor, the *Phoebe* would outstrip the slower *Cherub*, and the *Essex* could engage her alone. But the wind whipped up to gale force, and before the *Essex* could get under way, her port anchor cable parted, and she started dragging her starboard hook.

They got the remaining anchor up, and under close-reefed topsails, passed to the weather side of the British and almost made it around the western point of the harbor. But then a crashing sea took away the maintopmast. Wounded, the *Essex* staggered, and Porter could only try to get back to his old anchorage. The wind was against him, and the best he could do was make a small bay feebly covered by a one-gun Chilean shore battery. He dropped anchor near the shore and began to clear away the wreckage.

Hillyar aboard the *Phoebe* saw his chance and decided to forget the technicality of neutrality. His drums beat to quarters, and the *Phoebe* and *Cherub* closed for the kill.

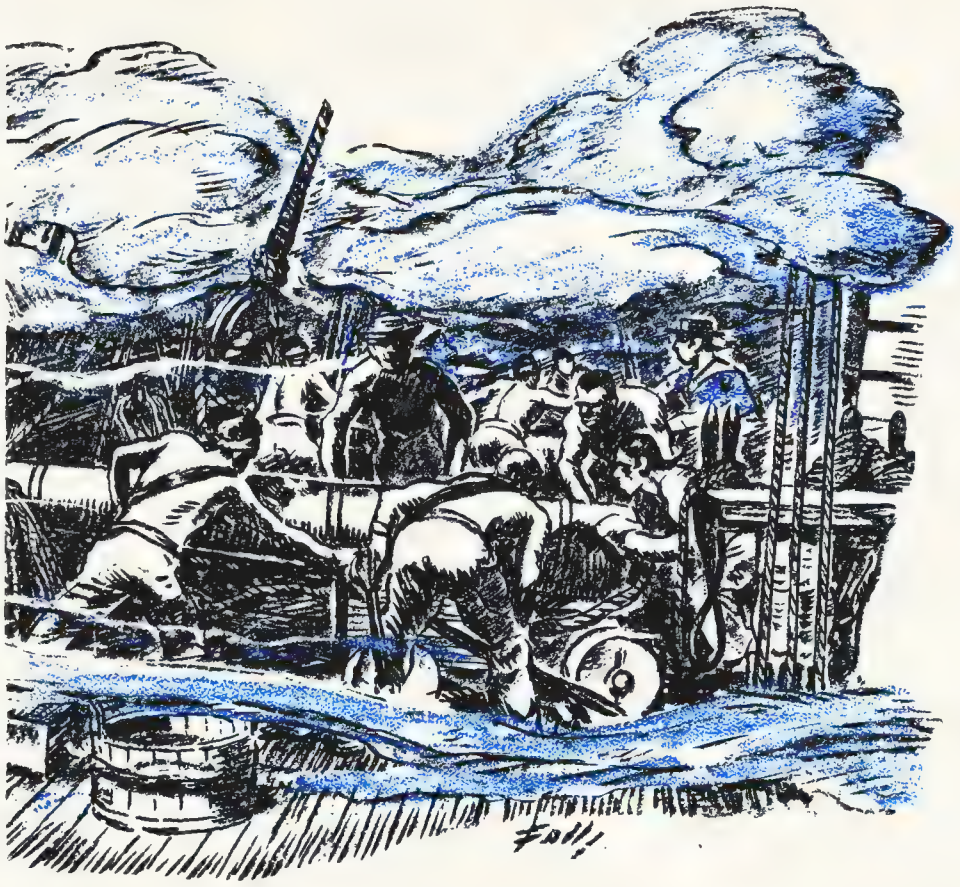
The *Phoebe* was rated a thirty-six and carried forty-six guns. Twenty of them were thirty-two-pound carronades on her spar deck. More important were the twenty-six long eighteens on her main deck.

The *Cherub* with her eighteen thirty-twos, eight twenty-fours, and two long nines was no mean antagonist herself.

Against these the *Essex* had only her six long twelves and forty (how Porter cursed them!) short thirty-twos that wouldn't carry a musket shot. The *Essex Junior* with her ten long sixes and ten short eighteens wouldn't figure for much in the fight.

Captain Hillyar had three hundred men aboard. Captain Tucker on the *Cherub* had 140 more. Porter had 255 aboard the *Essex* and Downes had sixty in the *Essex Junior*.

Hillyar opened with his long eighteens at four P.M. Porter could not reach him with a single gun. Three times he tried to bring the *Essex* around with springs—lines rigged from the stern to the anchor cables. Three times the springs were shot away. He hauled three of his long twelves aft, firing from the stern ports. For twenty minutes Porter fought his three guns against the *Phoebe's* and *Cherub's* combined broadsides. Porter's decks were slippery with blood, but so galling was his return fire that the Britishers were actually beaten off. At four-thirty they began again with their long guns, the *Phoebe* finding a safe position on *Essex's* port quarter, anchoring, and using her broadsides, while the *Cherub* warily continued under way firing her bowchasers. From



this angle Porter could not bring a single gun to bear.

At five-twenty, Porter slipped his cable and tried to close with the *Phoebe*. If he could board her, he still had a chance. Only his flying jib halyards were intact; with just her flying jib set, the *Essex* drove down on her attackers. For a hot two minutes she was close enough to bring her carronades into action. But first the *Cherub* and then the *Phoebe* edged off to a safer range and the crippled *Essex* could not follow.

The pounding continued. Downes came rowing, miraculously unhit, with a boatload of volunteers from the *Essex Junior* which Porter had kept out of the fight. Porter sent him back with orders to blow up the little ship if the British tried to take her.

Porter tried once more to close and once more the canny old Hillyar stood off, deliberately cutting the American to pieces. The *Essex* caught on fire; there was an explosion below decks. She was finished.

Porter told those who could swim to try for the shore if they wanted to. He ordered his division officers aft; one acting lieutenant was left on his feet to respond and he was wounded. There were only seventy-six men still fit for duty.

At 6:20 he struck his colors. In the confusion Hillyar continued to fire for ten more minutes. Fifty-eight of Porter's men had been killed, thirty-one more drowned, sixty-six were wounded: and twenty-four, some wounded, had reached the shore. Of the seventy-six still on their feet most were bruised or shaken by concussion. Porter himself had been knocked down by the windage of a passing shot.

The combined British loss was only five killed and ten wounded.

"I shall always regret, sir," said Porter to Hillyar, "that you would not match the *Phoebe*, ship for ship."

"My dear Porter," said the forty-four-year-old Englishman, "you cannot know the responsibility that hung over me with respect to your ship. Why, perhaps my very life depended upon my taking her. I had no choice."

And in fairness, Captain Hillyar's actions cannot be criticized. He had been sent by his government to destroy the *Essex*. Like a good captain he had fought her on his own terms. He returned Captain Porter's sword, paroled the Americans still able to cruise, and gave them the *Essex Junior* to take in cartel to New York. . . .

Seventy-three days later they were off Sandy Hook. Captain Nash of the blockading frigate *Saturn* questioned the safe conducts Hillyar had given Porter and told him to lie to for the night. Porter's temper flamed and he told the Englishman this act canceled his parole. Luck was with him. Under cover of the fog and falling breeze the *Essex Junior* reached Babylon, Long Island. New York went wild at Porter's arrival. He was fêted everywhere. Washington pulled a long face at the loss of the *Essex* and there was the usual court of inquiry, but one ship weighed lightly against the whole British whaling industry which he had destroyed.

Meanwhile, what had happened to Gamble and the rest of *Essex's* crew left on Nukahiva? That's a story in itself. To make it short: Gamble was to garrison Fort Madison until the first of May. If Porter had not returned by then he was to abandon the base and make his way home the best way he could. Wilson, the renegade Englishman, organized a native rebellion. Gamble's garrison mutinied. Shot through the heel, he managed to get to sea in the *Sir Andrew Hammond* with three sailors and three Marines. Somehow they reached the Hawaiian Islands but there were intercepted by the *Cherub*. With no way of defending himself, Gamble surrendered. Paroled in Rio de Janeiro in November, 1814, it wasn't until August, 1815, that he reached New York, broken in health, to receive a hero's welcome. Promoted to major and then to lieutenant colonel, he remained in the Marine Corps until his death in 1834.

Downes, the intrepid first lieutenant, was made a captain in 1817, fought the pirates off Algeria and Sumatra, and died, full of honors, in 1854.

James Hillyar took the battered *Essex* to England, continued a distinguished career, and lived to be knighted and a rear admiral in the Queen's Navy.

But the most flamboyant future of all was reserved for Porter, who continued to have the highest regard for orders and discipline—as long as they were his own and not someone else's. He fought out the tag end of the war of 1812 ashore and in 1815 published his "Journal of a Cruise Made to the Pacific Ocean." From 1823 to 1825 he chased pirates in the West Indies and then made an unauthorized landing against Foxardo, Puerto Rico. For this he was court-martialed and sentenced to six months' suspension. He resigned in a huff and went off to Mexico, then in revolt, to serve as commander-in-chief of the Mexican Navy. After three years of it—no pay, two attempts at his assassination, and the death of a son and nephew—he came back to the U. S. and was appointed consul-general at Algiers by his admirer Andrew Jackson. In 1839 he went to Turkey, first as chargé d'affaires and then as minister. Here he stayed until he died, in 1843, of angina pectoris. They brought his body home in the brig *Truxtun*.

Scanderbeg never forgot that his paramount duty was that of active and personal command.

Scanderbeg—

THIS TURKISH JANIZARY SECRETLY REMAINED CHRISTIAN, FINALLY REBELLED AND PROVED HIMSELF ONE OF THE GREATEST OF ALL SOLDIERS

by COLONEL CHARLES A. KING, JR.

THE profession of arms is no exception to the dictum: "Every art and every science has its own graveyard of forgotten genius." To the average person, the names of Belisarius, Wallenstein, Montrose and Gonsalvo de Córdoba mean little; but the student of military history regards the strategic and tactical concepts and operations of these forgotten leaders with admiration and awe.

We must travel far, both in place and time, to meet the man who is probably the greatest of all neglected and forgotten captains. The country is Albania; the century is the Fifteenth; and the soldier is George Castriota, commonly known as Scanderbeg.

Before the invention of the airplane, Albania offered an almost ideal theater of action for the exploits of a great soldier, particularly when he is engaged on the defensive. Everyone recalls how brilliantly the Greeks defended the southern part of the kingdom against the assaults of the greatly superior and better armed forces of Mussolini. This little country on the eastern shore of the Adriatic consists, in large part, of the ancient Greek territory of Epirus. Despite its small area, scanty population and questionable strategic value, it has long been a battleground comparable to Belgium. It is a land of towering crags, boulder-strewn valleys, and rushing torrents. Its inhabitants are bold, hardy and warlike. For centuries they maintained an unequal struggle against successive invading armies of Romans, Slavs, Byzantines, Venetians and of Turks; thereby winning their proud title of *Shkypetars*—Sons of the Mountain Eagle.

At the beginning of the Fifteenth Century the Albanian throne was occupied by John Castriota, a prince who claimed descent from the line of Alexander the Great. Early in life he married a Serbian princess named Vasiva, by whom he had four sons. The youngest of these sons, George, was born in the city of Croia, in 1403.

The years of Scanderbeg's infancy witnessed the swift and practically unchecked advance of the Ottoman Turks. From the time of Othman I, three centuries before, the banner of the Crescent had swept forward over western Asia and southern Europe. The Christian nations of the West seemed oblivious to their peril.

Albania did not escape the Moslem flood. When George Castriota was a mere youth, his father, unable to resist the great armies that had overrun Macedonia and Thessaly, was compelled to submit to the Turks, to pay tribute, and to deliver his four sons as hostages. The princes were taken to the then Turkish capital, Adrianople, there to become members of the Janizary corps.

Military history records no more efficient military organization than the unique corps of Janizaries. It was composed almost entirely of soldiers who, in infancy, had been carried off by the Turks from the Christian lands they had subjugated and overrun. These children were then inculcated with the strictest tenets of the Moslem faith, and subjected to the most exact military instruction and discipline; and upon reaching maturity they were enrolled in the Janizary corps—the shock troops of the Turkish regular army.

Upon arrival at Adrianople, the Castriota brothers were treated with the consideration due their rank, but the manly bearing and extraordinary intelligence of young George quickly attracted the attention of the Sultan. Having been circumcised and rechristened Iskander (Alexander), in honor of his illustrious ancestor, he was admitted to the imperial household, where he quickly became a favorite. His education was entrusted to the wisest of the Turkish scholars and the most renowned veterans of the Janizaries. The Sultan, Murad II, took the youth with him on many of his campaigns, and was so impressed by the dashing courage and able leadership of the young Albanian that he made him governor of a *sanjak* (provincial district) when he was only eighteen years old. Before he was twenty, Murad gave him the command of a brigade and conferred upon him the title of *Bey*. In the idiom of the Janizaries, the Turkish name of Iskander Bey became "Scanderbeg."

FOR the next two decades Scanderbeg remained a faithful and efficient soldier of the Sultan. During this time, by virtue of his great talents and his unbroken successes, he attained a fame second only to that of Murad himself. In the words of the Sultan, he was "The Bulwark and Extender of the Faith."

Forgotten Great Captain

But Scanderbeg never forgot his own land and his own people. Outwardly a great Turkish general and devout Moslem, at heart he was an Albanian patriot and a Christian. For years he carried on a secret correspondence with his countrymen, who eagerly looked forward to his coming for their deliverance.

While Scanderbeg was awaiting the favorable moment to strike for his country's freedom, his father, John Castriota, died—whereupon Murad annexed the Albanian principality, and caused the three elder Castriota princes to be secretly poisoned. The Sultan had no fear of Scanderbeg; he felt that the favors and rewards he had heaped upon his favorite had effectually weaned him from the land of his birth. Scanderbeg carefully dissembled his anger and sorrow; outwardly no officer was more assiduous in his duties, no servant more devoted.

Scanderbeg's long-awaited opportunity came in the campaign of 1442. In that year the Voivode of Transylvania, the renowned John Huniades, at the head of an army of thirty-five thousand men, crossed the Danube and invaded Turkish territory. Murad, with eighty thousand warriors, immediately moved to accept the Christian challenge. The opposing forces met near the town of Nish, in Serbia. Scanderbeg commanded the Turkish corps of some twenty thousand men that formed the vanguard of the Ottoman army. Shortly after contact was made, Scanderbeg gave the order to retire. His whole corps immediately withdrew from the field, and falling back upon the Turkish reserves, completely disorganized these veteran troops. Taking advantage of the confusion, Huniades counterattacked with every available man. As a result, the Moslem army was overwhelmed. Great numbers of the Turks were killed, and the survivors fled in wild panic. The circumstances all point to a prearranged agreement between Huniades and Scanderbeg.

Scanderbeg's plans had been carefully made. In the confusion of the flight he seized the Turkish vizier, or chief secretary, and with a dagger at

When the vizier refused to take an oath of secrecy, Scanderbeg stabbed him without hesitation.

Illustrated by JOHN RICHARD FLANAGAN

Firuz Pasha, the most famous swordsman in the Turkish army, was slain by Scanderbeg himself.

his throat, forced him to sign an order in the Sultan's name directing the governor of Croia, in Albania, to surrender the city and fortress to Scanderbeg. When the vizier refused to take an oath of secrecy, Scanderbeg stabbed him without hesitation; then, accompanied by three hundred devoted Janizaries, he rode hard for the Albanian frontier. Ten days later the fugitives crossed the border.

Without stopping for rest, Scanderbeg made for the capital, Croia, and boldly presented the vizier's order to the Ottoman commander. The latter, ignorant of the happenings at Nish, readily surrendered the fortress. With the strategic key to the kingdom in his possession, Scanderbeg abjured Islam and proclaimed himself the avenger of his family and the champion of the Cross. The Albanians rallied enthusiastically to the standard of their hereditary prince, and within a few weeks every Turk had been expelled from the country.

No sooner was the land cleared of invaders than Scanderbeg began energetic measures for its defense. He concluded treaties of alliance with Naples and Venice, and secured from these states the promise of financial aid in his war with the Porte. He equipped and drilled the raw Albanian volunteers; he inspected and strengthened the forts and strongholds; he collected great stores of provisions and munitions.

His defensive measures had hardly been completed when word was brought that a Turkish army, forty thousand strong, was moving toward his borders. The Ottoman forces were headed by Ali Pasha, a warrior who had won renown on many a field in Asia and Europe. The Sultan, enraged by the desertion of Scanderbeg and the revolt of the Albanians, had offered Ali a huge sum of money to "bring back the body of the traitor, dead or alive." Confident of winning the promised reward, the Moslem general led his troops into the Albanian passes.

More than twenty thousand Albanians rallied around their prince to repel the invaders. Scanderbeg selected fifteen thousand of these and dismissed the others to their homes. "We will never win by numbers," he said. "Our only hope lies in skill, courage and devotion." He knew too well the scanty population of his country to risk needlessly the life of a single soldier.

The operations of Scanderbeg against Ali Pasha are typical of many of his future campaigns which marked him as a tactician of the first order. By pretending to retreat, he lured the Turks into a long narrow valley surrounded by high wooded hills. Then suddenly from the forested slopes a converging fire of arrows, javelins and arquebus balls was opened upon the surprised Turks; at the same time great stones and tree-trunks, propelled by rude cannon and military engines from the cliffs, were hurled into the crowded valley. The Turks were brave and disciplined soldiers, but they were demoralized by the unexpectedness and ferocity of the attack, and by their inability to reach their assailants. Their attempt at an orderly withdrawal quickly degenerated into a rout. Then Scanderbeg, at the head of a picked force, sallied out from a defile and fell upon their rear. Nightfall enabled a remnant to escape. The Turkish losses were over twenty thousand dead and two thousand prisoners; the Albanian losses were less than one thousand.

But Scanderbeg was not satisfied with having destroyed Ali's army. Collecting all his forces, he invaded Turkish territory and ravaged the rich provinces of Macedonia and Thessaly. At the end of a week he was back with his followers loaded down with greater supplies of provisions and munitions than they had ever seen before. In fact, during his entire reign, extending over more than twenty years, Scanderbeg largely defrayed the expenses of his impoverished government with booty captured from his enemies. Quoting the monkish chronicler: "The Sultan's dominions were Scanderbeg's revenues."

The next expedition against the Albanian rebel was commanded by Mustapha, one of the ablest of the Turkish generals. But Mustapha's bravery and experience were of no avail. A few days after he invaded Albania he was fleeing for his life, leaving behind him the bodies of five thousand of his followers.

In rendering his report to the Sultan, Mustapha generously praised the courage and military skill of his antagonist. He described Scanderbeg as "a master of wiles and ambuscades and all warlike strategies," and expressed the opinion that he would never be conquered except by an overwhelming force.

Murad was so impressed by Mustapha's report that he promptly gave him command of a new army of invasion. Mustapha was a good soldier, but he was now opposed to a genius. His army was ambushed in a gorge of the Pindus Mountains, with escape cut off by a swift stream, and almost completely destroyed. The general was among the many Turks taken prisoner. His ransom was twenty-five thousand gold ducats, and upon its payment Scanderbeg distributed the entire sum among his soldiers.

During this period the Sultan had been victorious in all other theaters of war. He had destroyed Huniades' army at the great battle of Varna, and his troops had overrun Serbia and the neighboring provinces.

Murad now determined to crush Scanderbeg, once and for all time. Summoning a great assembly of his chief generals and advisors, he made known his plan. Fortunately, his speech has been preserved; its language shows clearly his rage and humiliation.

"Hitherto, most worthy and trusted counselors," he said, "we have well nourished and augmented the prosperous temerity of this fugitive Scanderbeg. . . .

"We have so long deferred the punishment of this hateful enemy that by the multitude of his outrages and abuses he hath freely and without chastisement incensed the majesty of the Ottoman empire. His fierce and furious madness has increased so far that he even dares to be aforehand in assaulting us. . . . How long shall we endure the attempts of this wicked and seditious wretch? Shall we, who have broken the force of so many mighty potentates and brought them to naught, suffer this miserable country to bring these troubles and tumults upon us? . . . It behooves us to march into Epirus with a mighty host so that the country may not be able to sustain the force and violence of our arms. I will myself, as formerly in other wars, lead my armies. It is your duty, as valiant and worthy men, to assist in this undertaking, not as you are wont to do against the Hungarians and other enemies, but with far greater wrath against this Scanderbeg, who, from being our former slave, now shows his insolent mind toward us."

Murad speedily completed his elaborate preparations for the campaign. At the head of 140,000 men he invaded Albania. But the mighty Caliph proved to be as impotent as his subordinates to ward off disaster. This rugged land of narrow valleys and steep mountains made large-scale maneuvers impossible; in addition, the separated columns were continually ambushed and harassed. In spite of his utmost exertion, Murad was able to capture but a single weakly defended fortress (Sfetigrade). Thousands of his soldiers perished at the hands of the fierce mountaineers; and his own favorite, Firuz Pasha, the most famous swordsman in the entire Turkish army, was slain in single combat by Scanderbeg himself.

This crushing defeat served but to fan the Sultan's hate. In the spring of the following year, 1450, he embarked upon a second campaign against Scanderbeg. The farthest confines of the Ottoman empire were called upon for levies for the colossal host of 160,000 which he led against the little Christian state.

Scanderbeg could muster only ten thousand men for the defense of his country, but these troops were all veteran mountain fighters who hated the Turks and were devoted to their prince. Scanderbeg wisely decided to confine his operations entirely to the guerrilla type of warfare in which he was unexcelled. Having learned the Sultan's objective was Croia, he garrisoned and provisioned that fortress, then withdrew into the nearby mountains with the remainder of his army.

Murad quickly penetrated Albania and invested Croia. When the Count of Ureuna, the commander, refused an immense bribe to surrender, the Sultan decided to reduce the stronghold by siege. But his most skilled engineers tried in vain to undermine the rocky foundations of the citadel, and his most powerful military engines proved powerless to breach its walls. Ten times he hurled the Janizaries against the battlements, and ten times the defenders flung them back.

During this period Scanderbeg was indefatigable in his efforts to annoy and harass the besiegers. He captured convoys; he cut off foraging parties; in swift night attacks he raided the Ottoman camp. As in all his battles, Scanderbeg himself, "with his right arm bare," fought at the head of his troops. So great was his physical strength and skill in personal combat that he was regarded with superstitious awe and terror by the ignorant Moslem soldiery. Their fears were well grounded, for during the course of his career, he is said to have slain three thousand Turks with his own hand. His favorite weapon was a great Damascus blade, so finely tempered that with one stroke he could split a heavy steel helmet in twain.

At length Murad, his forces decimated and his supplies failing, abandoned all hope of capturing Croia and ordered a retreat. A short time after reaching Adrianople the old warrior died. With his last breath he exacted from his son and successor, Mahomet, a promise of vengeance against Scanderbeg.

All Europe now rang with the fame of Scanderbeg's valor and his achievements. Congratulations, orders of knighthood, and magnificent presents were lavished upon him by the admiring rulers of every Christian state. Many of the most noted cavaliers of France, Burgundy and Italy, anxious to augment their martial renown, hastened to enroll themselves under his victorious banner.

The new Sultan, Mahomet II, known in Turkish history under the significant title of "The Conqueror," quickly showed his policy toward his father's most inveterate foe. The first two years of his reign saw two great armies launched in succession against Albania. These expeditions met with the same fate that had attended their predecessors; as for the two Ottoman commanders-in-chief, one was captured and ransomed for a huge sum, while the other was slain by Scanderbeg's own terrible weapon.

Shortly thereafter Mahomet secretly opened negotiations with Amese, Scanderbeg's nephew and one of the ablest Albanian generals. Bribed by the offer of the Albanian crown, Amese deserted to the Turks. He was ordered to lead a huge army against his countrymen. Since he was familiar with his uncle's defensive plans, Amese felt his success was assured.

Again Scanderbeg outgeneraled his opponent. Assuming the offensive, he swept down in a surprise attack upon the Turkish army that had encamped on the ancient Roman battlefield of Pharsalia, near the border of Thessaly and Albania. At the head of four thousand cavalry, supported by an equal number of infantry, Scanderbeg struck the Turks frontally; while thus engaged, his best general, Moses Goleme, hit their flank hard. Terrific slaughter followed; the bodies of twenty thousand Turks were added to the bones of the Roman legions, and among the five thousand prisoners was the renegade Amese.

For five years after Pharsalia, Mahomet tried in vain to conquer Albania. Appalled at the long succession of disasters he had suffered, the Sultan at last sent envoys to ask terms on which Scanderbeg would make peace. The answer was brief and to the point. "I demand," replied Scanderbeg, in substance, "the acknowledgment of the complete independence of my country, and the withdrawal forever by the Sultan of all his claims to sovereignty over Albania." His letter was signed: *"Soldier of Jesus Christ, George Castriota, otherwise called Scanderbeg, Prince of the Albanians and Epirots."*

Mahomet swallowed his shame and resentment, and in an imperial rescript signed June 22, 1461, he unconditionally granted Scanderbeg's terms. After two decades of warfare Albania was again free.

Both Mahomet and Scanderbeg knew that the treaty was no more than a diplomatic fiction. The Sultan wanted a truce only to gain time to assemble and organize his forces for the final conquest of the little country. Turkish raiding parties repeatedly penetrated Albanian territory, and the protests of the Albanian government were unanswered.

The Sultan's most powerful military engines proved

In the year 1463 the war was renewed with the greatest fury. Scanderbeg was at first encouraged by reports that the Roman pontiff, Pius II, was assembling a great army of French, Spaniards and Italians to march to his aid. Unfortunately the Pope died before the expedition could be organized, and the Crusaders, left without a leader, gave up the enterprise.

Scanderbeg now faced alone the power of the entire Moslem world.

It is needless to recount the story of the next four years, which shows an almost unbroken record of Turkish invasion and defeat. On one occasion two large armies marched to invade Albania simultaneously from different directions, planning to unite near Croia. But spies reported the Moslem plan, and Scanderbeg surprised and destroyed the army advancing through Thrace before it could contact the invading force from the south. He then marched against the southern column, but the Turkish general hastily withdrew into Thessaly without a fight. He is reported to have exclaimed: "Now do I acknowledge the misfortune of the House of Osman and the glory of Scanderbeg!"

But the last scene in the lurid drama of Scanderbeg's life was hurrying to its close. In January, 1467, he was invited to attend a conference of Italian princes to discuss a plan for concerted action against the Turks. He contracted a malignant fever on the way, and upon reaching Alessio, in Venetia, he found it impossible to proceed farther. During his illness a raiding force of fifteen thousand Turkish cavalry approached the town, but upon learning of the proximity of Scanderbeg, they hastily turned about and fled. Prostrate and dying, he was still a terror to his enemies.

powerless to breach the wall of the stronghold.

Scanderbeg's last hours were spent in calmly arranging the affairs of his government. He confided the care and education of his young son to the Venetian Republic; then he died. He was buried at Alessio; and when, years later, that town was captured by the Turks, his body was dug up and fragments of his bones were distributed as charms among the Moslem soldiers. There could be no more convincing testimonial to the valor and success of the greatest of the foes of Islam.

The death of Scanderbeg marked the end of his country's independence. Four years later the Turks entered into complete possession of the kingdom. Today the only monument to his glorious exploits is the short black jacket worn by his countrymen—the Albanians' badge of mourning for their national hero.

Scanderbeg is commonly regarded as a great patriot and an outstanding national leader; but it is as a soldier, and particularly as a tactician, that he deserves to rank with the immortals. His grasp and understanding of the basic principles of war are amazing when one recalls the rude and unlettered age in which he lived. Neither Hannibal nor Napoleon ever utilized to greater effect the fundamental principles of *surprise, mobility* and *concentration of force* than did Scanderbeg. No military leader ever had a greater "feeling" for topography in war, or exploited it to greater advantage. His favorite ruse of withdrawing the center of his battle line and pretending to retreat until his opponent was deeply involved, then attacking from both flanks, finds exact parallels in the decisive battles of Cannæ and Tannenberg. When confronted with two converging foes, he massed his forces and destroyed the opposing armies in detail before they could unite; thus setting the classic example that was so successfully followed in later times by Bonaparte and Von Moltke.

Scanderbeg had nothing approaching the pattern of a modern staff to advise and aid him. He was his own chief of administration, intelligence, planning, and supply; but in carrying out these details he never forgot that his paramount duty was that of active and personal command.

Of this great and almost forgotten soldier, one commentator has stated: "It is doubtful whether any captain in history has surpassed him in essential gifts, or equalled his marvels of military leadership." General Wolfe, conqueror of Quebec, wrote: "He exceeds all officers, ancient and modern, in the conduct of a small defensive army."

Salute to Scanderbeg, Soldier of Jesus Christ!

The Bell-bottom

ON a bright morning at sea in the spring of 1940, Terry Parker held muster on his troubles and found them spouting like fountains in his brimming cup of woe. In his mind's eye he visualized the court-martial that was as sure to come as beans for breakfast on Wednesday and Saturday.

"Is it true, Mr. Parker, that when in command of the destroyer *Stratford* you ran out of oil and had to be towed to Panama?"

"Yes sir."

"Explain to the court why you permitted this situation to come about."

On that question his mental picture faded off into the shadows. How could you put into words the exultancy of a first command? How could you describe the pleasure and pain of taking from the back channel a rusty, moth-eaten four-stacker, twenty years out of commission, and making her a thing of life?

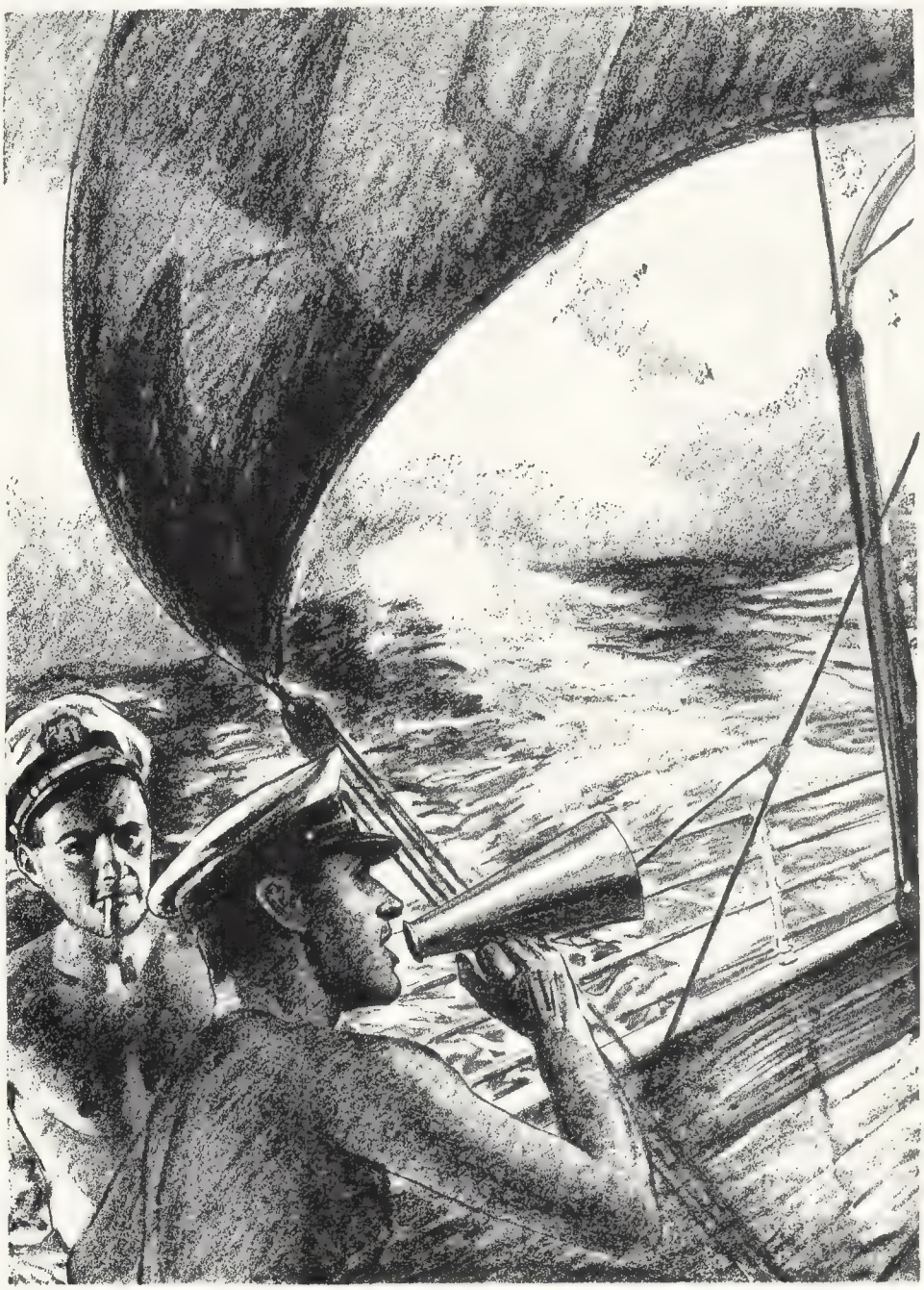
Would the members of the court be moved by a description of Dick Lutes, the Executive Officer, a man weaned on sour milk and sarcasm, or Ensign Murdock, the most ill-suited engineer in any ocean, or Michael Flaherty, a chief boatswain's mate who was called back to active duty after a quarter of a century on the retired list? Certainly not.

Parker leaned forward in his bridge chair and called down a pair of voice tubes. "Fuel report," he ordered over the one that brought to his nostrils a whiff of the engine-room; "Coffee," over the one marked pantry. "Make it two," he added as a voice at his elbow murmured, "Good morning," in a tone that denied any meaning to the adjective.

He turned to meet the eye of Lieutenant Richard Lutes, Executive Officer and Navigator, and a man who viewed life through a pair of very dark spectacles.

"Maybe we'll make it, Dick," he said, trying not to act like a captain who was about to terminate his first command in disgrace.

"How?" asked the Exec, putting into the one word the full flavor of habitual pessimism. "How are we ever going to do anything in this crazy bucket when all we have to run it with are a bunch of square pegs in round holes? Look at what we've got for an engineer officer! Ensign Murdock—a ninety-day wizard who doesn't know a turbine from a triphammer. A lawyer!" he added, with a world of scorn for every member of the legal profession.



"Give a pull on Paulette Goddard," Parker called out through his

Parker motioned his Exec to the side of the bridge out of earshot of the helmsman who was listening with obvious relish to one officer saying nasty things about another. "Don't be too rough on the boy, Dick.

"And another thing," he went on. "Take it a little easy with Flaherty. Sure, he's on old-timer—retired from active duty about the time I was born. But he's a good boatswain's mate."

"THAT one!" replied Lutes in a tone of deep disgust. "A square peg if I ever saw one! An old coot who

Jigger

"Hold fast to Dotty Lamour!" and "Haul up on Betty Grable!" were only a few of the weird commands given by the bosun when the *Stratford* ran out of fuel, and he named the jury-rigged sails in a lingo his greenhorn crew would understand.

by P. G. *and* FREDERICK BELL

megaphone, and, "You there on the jigger, take up on Myrna Loy."

hasn't had a new thought since the battle of Manila Bay."

This profitless discussion between Captain and Exec was interrupted by the arrival on the bridge of Ensign Murdock, a slender figure in sweat-soaked dungarees, whose expression might have been interpreted as showing anxiety and perplexity—unless you were Lieutenant Richard Lutes, when you would have defined it as a blank look indicative of an intellectual vacuum.

Mr. Murdock held out a slip of paper to his captain. "Here's the last hour's report, sir."

Parker inspected the figures, then shook his head slowly. "Worse and worse," he muttered. "What's the trouble down there, Mr. Murdock?"

"Sir," replied the engineer officer, "ever since the oil king opened the wrong valve and pumped ten thousand gallons over the side, the fireroom force has sort of gone to pieces. I wish I knew what to say, sir," he went on, looking the Captain in the eyes. "I know I'm a pretty poor excuse for an engineer, but if we can just get her to Panama and fill up with oil, maybe we can take her the rest of the way."

At this point a new figure came to the bridge, a rugged giant in faded dungarees, his white-thatched brows shading steely blue eyes sunk deep in a face that was tanned to the hue worn by old leather, old mahogany, and old mariners. On his bare arms tattoo professors had long ago laid on their masterpieces in ports over the world, and in subjects that ranged from "the sailor's grave," complete with broken marble column and a scantily-dressed female mourner, to the tail of a green dragon that disappeared beneath his sleeve to wind about his shoulders in the authentic trademark of an old China hand. This was Michael Flaherty, chief boatswain's mate of the *Stratford*—who, together with Mr. Murdock, shared the Executive Officer's most outspoken displeasure.

" 'Morning, sir," Flaherty addressed the Exec, raising his fingers to his cap in a curious forelock salute. "I hear we're running pretty short of fuel and figured if you'd let me shift to hand-steering, we could cut out the steering-engine and save a little oil that way."

LUTES prepared his face for his customary reply of strong negation, but before he could speak, the Captain broke in: "Good idea. Not having to use power for the steering-engine is like money in the bank."

Flaherty touched his forelock and lumbered off, followed by Ensign Murdock, who jumped at every chance to put as much distance as possible between himself and the Exec.

"That's all very well," grumbled Lutes, "but it's going to take a hell of a lot more than hand-steering to make up for ten thousand gallons of Bunker-B that were pumped over the side under the gallant leadership of Mr. Lawyer Murdock."

The fuel situation aboard the *Stratford* had, in fact, long since passed the

joking point. Between her present position and the oil docks at Panama there lay twelve hundred miles of very watery ocean. Using only one boiler and steaming at her most economical speed, the *Stratford* burned two hundred and fifty gallons of oil each hour. Converted into miles, it was perfectly obvious to Terry Parker that only a combination of smooth sea, no head winds, and the strictest measures of fuel economy would save him from the supreme embarrassment of radioing ahead to Panama for an oil tanker or a tug to meet the *Stratford* at sea. And he knew that this action, virtually unheard of in the annals of the Navy, would bring the wrath of his seniors descending about his ears and would terminate forthwith his first opportunity at commanding a ship of his own.

Below decks Ensign Murdock spent his time rushing between fire-room and engine-room with frequent time-outs to skim quickly through a large book entitled "Manual of Engineering Instructions" where he sought with little success to find an easy answer to the question of how to keep the propellers turning if there were no oil in the tanks. . . .

Late that night a dispatch arrived from the Commandant of the Fifteenth Naval District at Panama. It read: *"PBY en route Pearl to Panama down at sea 300 miles bearing 285 from Cape Honda. Proceed at best speed. Render assistance."*

Terry Parker threw his pajama-clad legs over the side of his bunk, pressed the pantry bell for a cup of coffee, and sent word for the navigator to plot in the plane's position and give him a course.

Dick Lutes arrived at the same time as the coffee.

"Captain, we can't do it. It will take us four hundred miles off our course. The sea is rising; the wind is northwest, twenty knots, and it looks as if we're in for a blow. I suggest we tell Com Fifteen that we haven't enough oil to carry out the job."

"Uh-uh, we won't do that," replied the Captain. "The bird-men would rather take their chances aboard a broken-down tin can than to sit in the drink in a busted flying-machine."

THERE was a timid knock at the Captain's door and Ensign Murdock, the most completely confused engineer officer in all the seven seas, stepped into the cabin. "You sent for me, sir?"

The Captain held out the dispatch. "Cut in another boiler as soon as you can and let me know when it's on the line. We'll close that PBY at twenty-seven knots. There's some weather making up and I don't know how long she'll stay afloat."

Lieutenant Lutes, his face wearing the cheerful expression of a man who has just swallowed a lemon, glanced at Ensign Murdock's glistening black locks. "It might be a good idea if you empty your bottle of hair oil into the fuel tanks. A lawyer!" he sniffed, leaving the cabin as if the atmosphere had become too close for him.

"That's all, Mr. Murdock," said Parker. "Bear a hand lighting off that other kettle." He sat for a few moments sipping his coffee, then pulled the pajamas from his lean form and made for the shower. "I guess I haven't lived right," he mused. "An Exec who was brought up on sour milk; an oil king who dumps ten thousand gallons of fuel into the ocean; a chief engineer who thinks a turbine is something a Mohammedan wears around his head; and a chief boatswain's mate who won't believe that steam is here to stay."

Dawn broke on a boisterous day with a fresh northwest wind whipping the crest of a mounting sea in whirling streamers that flung themselves tauntingly across the *Stratford* like the flags of a confident enemy.

It was late afternoon when the crow's-nest buzzer sounded on the bridge and the lookout aloft, who was getting a roller-coaster ride and not liking it, reported, "Plane in sight, two points on the starboard bow." The *Stratford* changed course and headed for the PBY whose crew were clinging to the hull with one hand and waving their shirts with the other to attract the destroyer's attention. It was out of the question to attempt to lower a boat. Terry Parker, estimating correctly that the *Stratford* would drift faster than the partially submerged seaplane, brought the ship close up to windward and let it fall bodily toward the plane. Manila lines and willing hands brought the nine-man crew aboard in short order.

"That's that," said Parker, when a few shots from Number Two gun had disposed of the plane. "Now let's get hold of Mr. Murdock and tell him to bring the bad news to the bridge."

The news was even worse than that. A correspondence-school graduate in first-year arithmetic would have had no difficulty in determining that the *Stratford* had as much chance of reaching Panama as Mr. Murdock of receiving, by air mail, a degree in engineering from MIT.

"One boiler and one engine, Mr. Murdock," ordered Parker. "Cut off the power to all auxiliaries except the sanitary pumps. We'll use oil lanterns through the ship, and salt water in the washrooms."

In a quartering sea that bounced the *Stratford* like a nervous bronc, four men climbed the spokes of the big old-fashioned hand steering-wheel two decks below the fantail.

WITH a final admonition to steer a steady course, come hell or high water, chief boatswain's mate Michael Flaherty clambered the steel ladder from after steering and came face to face with Ensign Murdock, the only Great Engineer who had never lived in the White House.

"Flaherty," said Mr. Murdock, "as one square peg to another, what do you think of our chances?"

"Well, now, I'll tell you, sir," replied the old chief, lifting his cap and running a marlinspike finger through his white hair. "I never been shipmates with these new-fangled turbine engines. My last ship had good honest reciprocators. And we shoveled coal, which is as it should be, 'cause you can't turn the wrong valve and pump a thousand tons of coal over the side without nobody knowing it."

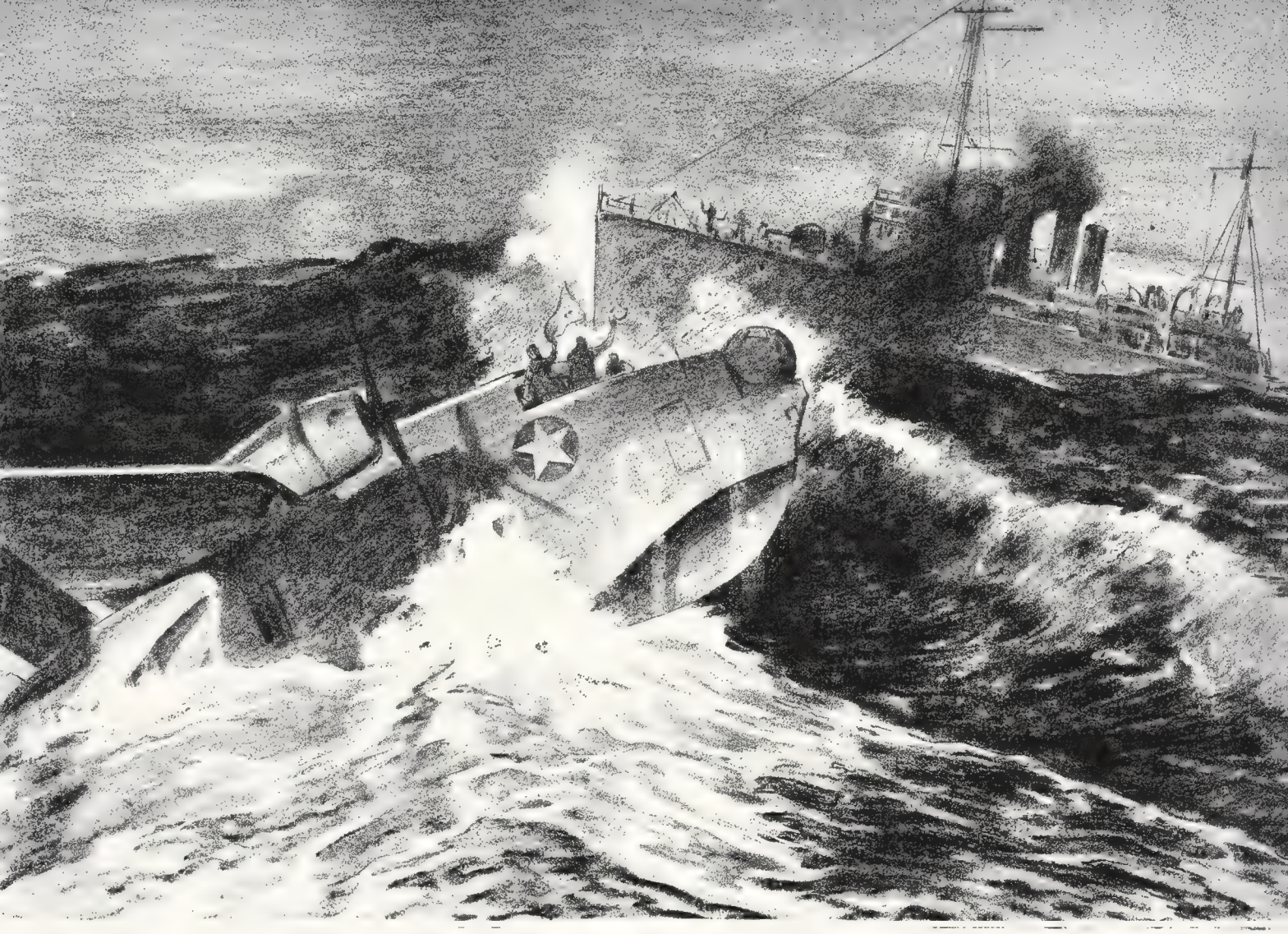
Ensign Murdock nodded his head absently. "I suppose the Captain had no other choice, but it's a funny system that puts me in an engine-room, when I've sailed boats all my life."

Flaherty's eyes lighted with interest. "You mean—"

"Yeah. Everything from a frostbite to a voyage in the *Leilani*. That's a square-rig yacht, a big one—belongs to my uncle."

Flaherty looked at the young officer with a new admiration. "Mr. Mur-

"Pin-up girls—every man has 'em tacked to the underside of his locker top."



Parker, estimating that the Stratford *would drift faster, brought it to windward and let it fall toward the plane.*

dock," he said, extending a massive paw, "I'd like to shake your hand. If you've cruised in a square-rigger, even a square-rig yacht, you've doubled the number of real sailors aboard this ship—'cause now that makes two of us."

Mr. Murdock smiled. "If we had some way of changing the *Stratford* from a turbine ship to a wind ship, I guess you and I would know how to handle her. But that's impossible, so I'd better get below and see what we burned the last hour."

FLAHERTY spoke, and there was awe in his voice. "Sir," he said, "call me a Marine if you haven't got it! It just goes to show what a college education will do for a seaman. And me, I never thought of it! Being cautious by nature,"—Mr. Murdock suppressed a grin, for caution was one trait of character completely lacking from Flaherty's makeup—"and seeing as how we was going to the tropics and how they didn't need all them awnings at San Diego, me and some of the boys laid in a couple of spare sets from the warehouse. Why, we've got enough canvas aboard to make a frigate out of her—'cepting there's only one mast."

"In that case," grinned Murdock, "we'll make her a sloop—the United States Sloop-of-War *Stratford.*" He pulled a pencil and notebook from his dungaree pocket and made rapid sketches.

"We'll have to make a square sail for the foremast. We can use the boat boom for a yard. Then, if the forestay is heavy enough, we can set a jib."

Flaherty nodded judicially. "Quite right, sir, and maybe later on we can guy the mainmast strong enough to take a small jigger."

"That sounds all right," said Murdock. "Break out your awnings and get the best men you've got with palm and needle. There'll be a lot of sewing and rigging to do."

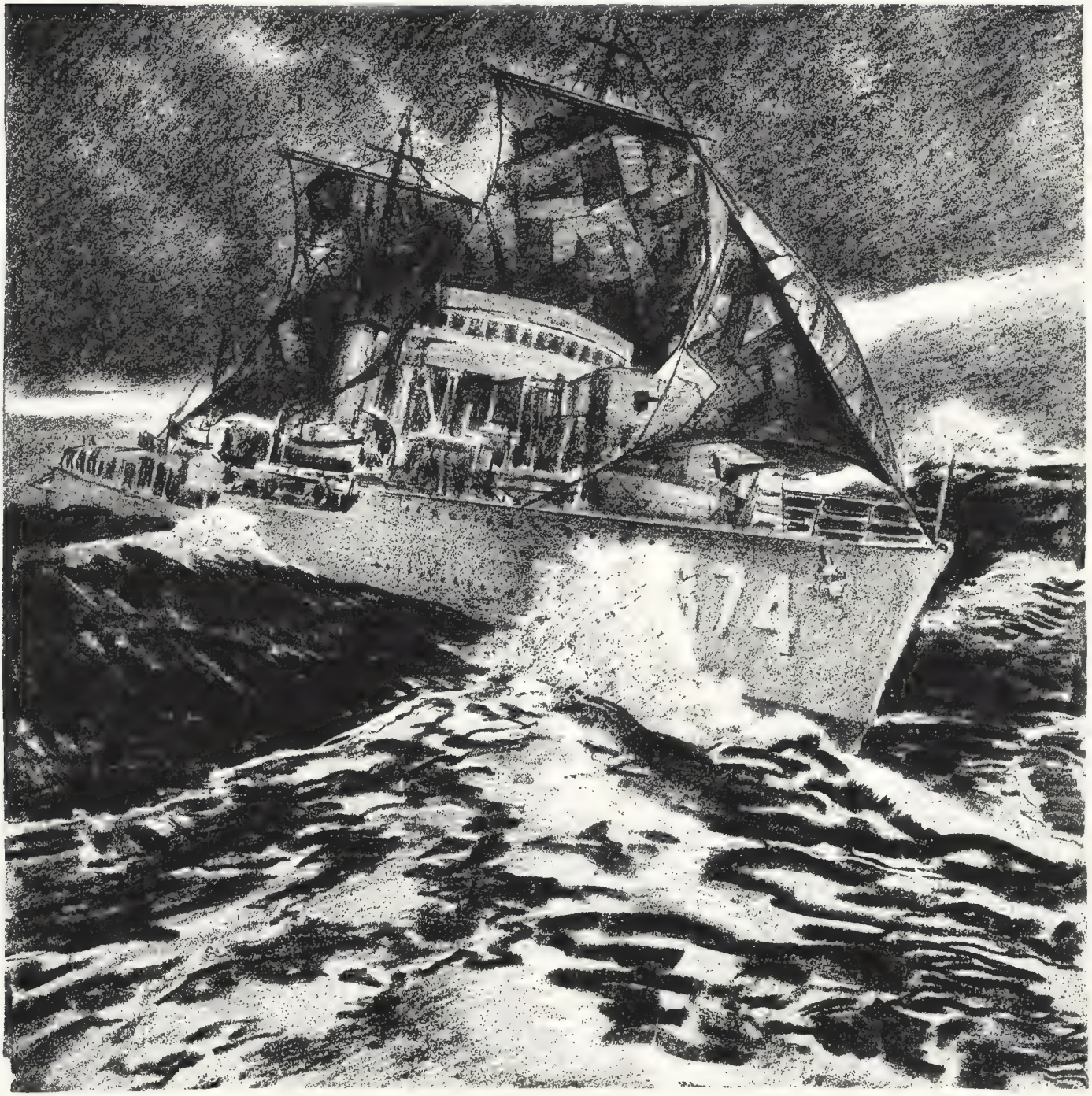
"Sir," Flaherty replied, "that will be my department. When it comes to good honest seamanship, these deck monkeys I've got are a bunch of round pegs in square holes, but I'll do what I can with 'em."

Throughout the night the deck force of the *Stratford,* under the constant eye of Mike Flaherty, worked with palm and needle, fid and marlinspike, grommet and thimble, manila line and serving mallet—cutting, sewing, splicing, to form the sails and the standing and running rigging that they would need. Except for the steel walls of the *Stratford,* it might have been a below-deck scene in "Old Ironsides" as the sailors sat cross-legged in the lower compartment under the flickering gleam of oil lanterns.

At dawn Mr. Murdock awoke his Captain. Lieutenant Commander Parker cracked an eye and closed it hastily as if the sight of his engineer officer caused him physical pain. "All right, Murdock, what is it now? Have we lost suction? Turbine blades stripped? Leaky boiler tube?" He opened his eyes and sat bolt upright. "Or," he went on, with a mixture of hope and unbelief in his voice, "have you come to tell me there's a tanker in sight?"

"No, sir," said Ensign Murdock quietly. He took a deep breath. "I've come to ask your permission to make sail."

Terry Parker blinked and motioned to a chair. "Sit down, young fellow. You've been under a heck of a strain,



Illustrated by Frederic Anderson

but you mustn't let it get you. I'm about to send a radio to Com Fifteen, requesting either a tug or a tanker. Now why don't you go below and get some rest?"

Mr. Murdock was tired, but the peculiar look about his face came from excitement, not from a mental breakdown.

"I mean it, sir, really. Flaherty and I, and the deck force, have worked since yesterday getting the sails ready." He whipped out a sketch of a four-stack destroyer of the *Stratford* class under square foresail, jib, and spanker, a sight that made Terry Parker recoil as from a serpent.

"I'll admit it looks funny," said Murdock, "but I think it'll work. The

Canvas bellied out in a manner that would have pleased Isaac Hull.

Stratford isn't much bigger than my uncle's yacht, and while I never saw the *Leilani* under forecourse, jib and jigger, if this wind holds out I believe it'll give us a good six knots—maybe six and a half."

Parker nodded in a dazed fashion. "Uh-huh. That other half knot is mighty important, isn't it, Mr. Murdock."

He came out of his trance and commenced to grin. "This proves it. I knew I lived right. Uh—what did the Executive Officer have to say?"

Mr. Murdock kept his eyes fixed on a spot over the Captain's shoulder. "Sir, I thought it best not to disturb the Executive Officer. He'll be up in a few minutes to get his morning star sights and I'd like to get the sails rigged before then, so he won't—so we won't be in his way."

Lieutenant Commander Parker nodded. "Yes, you wouldn't want to be in his way, would you?" A ghost of a smile touched his lips. "All right, Mr. Murdock, damn the turbines, full speed ahead, under jib, mainsail, and jigger—and a pajama spinnaker, if that's what you and Flaherty want."

When Mr. Murdock had gone the Captain dressed hurriedly. He wanted to miss not one scene in the nautical play that was about to commence, though he wondered if the curtain

would rise on a comedy or a tragedy. "I can see how they'd sew some awnings together—at least I guess that's what they did—and I don't know why I didn't think of it earlier. Maybe it'll work, with a following wind, but two men can't handle all that canvas alone and nobody else in the crew knows a main brace from a topsail halyard. . . . Yes, sir," he added, as he pulled a tarnished cap over his eyes, "this cruise has novelty, I'll say that much for it."

How to make deck sailors out of greenhorns in one easy lesson was a matter that had troubled Mr. Murdock and Mike Flaherty during the black hours of the night, while they watched their most accomplished help stab their fingers with needles.

"I dunno what we'll do with 'em," said Flaherty. "I remember a merchant skipper that shipped a crowd of waterfront rats who didn't know one line from another. The only thing they knew was how to play cards, so the captain put playing-cards at all the lines and ordered his deck-wallopers to 'heave round on the Jack of Spades; slack off on the Ten of Diamonds!' But that won't work with these kids, 'cause they don't know nothing about cards, and we can't let 'em use the one game they do know 'cause dice is too small and the numbers only go up to six anyhow."

"Pin-ups," said Ensign Murdock.

"Sir?"

"Pin-up girls—every man in the ship has 'em tacked to the underside of his locker top."

Flaherty did not conceal his admiration. To Mr. Murdock he gave his highest accolade. "Sir," he said, "I wish you had been shipmates with me and Admiral Dewey. We'd have got along fine."

A low ceiling of clouds traveled rapidly above the *Stratford* and blotted out the sky. There were no star sights because there were no stars. In consequence, it was broad daylight when the Executive Officer came on deck, wholly unprepared for the sight which met his eyes. Suspended from a yard that crossed the foremast just below the crow's-nest a great canvas sail bellied out in a manner that would have pleased Stephen Decatur or Isaac Hull. Its handsome appearance was not diminished by stenciled notations Forecastle Awning U.S.S. *Stratford;* Galley Deckhouse Awning U.S.S. *Preble.*

Mr. Lutes, his mouth at the dip like a dyspeptic porpoise, took a cautious step across the well-deck and was nearly knocked from his feet by a dozen men tailing on to the end of a line and obeying a shouted command, "Haul taut on Hedy Lamarr!" A few yards away two other men eased off on another line in obedience to the crisp command, "Slack off a hair on Lana Turner."

"Shades of Paul Jones and the sainted sea pig!" gasped Lieutenant Lutes. "The ship's a madhouse!" Cautiously he made his way to the bridge, which he found deserted save for one man, who was leaning from the forward window, admiring the smooth set of the jib.

The events of the past few minutes had been too much for Mr. Lutes.

"Good morning," he said in a tone of syrupy politeness. "Am I mistaken, or was this mariner's nightmare formerly the U.S.S. *Stratford?*"

The sailor turned, gave a forelock salute in the manner of Michael Flaherty, and hitched up his trousers as the hero had done in "Pirates of the Spanish Main," in Technicolor. "Morning, sir," he said. "Right smart breeze. Guess we might have to take a reef in the mainsail if it blows much stronger."

Lieutenant Lutes backed gingerly toward the ladder. "Yeah," he agreed, "I guess we might."

Ducking under billowing canvas, he made his way aft to the fantail where, he reasoned, he would be most apt to find the Captain, now that the *Stratford* had emerged in the rôle of "New Ironsides."

Sure enough, there was Lieutenant Commander Terry Parker, who seemed, like the man on the bridge, to have come under a spell of the wind ships, for he stood with legs apart and a megaphone in his hand through which he bellowed an occasional order that caused Lutes to know for sure the ship was mad.

"Give a six-inch pull on Paulette Goddard," he called out through his megaphone, and, "You, there, on the jigger, take up on Myrna Loy!"

"Good morning, sir," said Lieutenant Lutes. "How's she answering her helm on the starboard tack?"

"Ah, good morning, First Mate," replied Parker, giving the same nautical hitch to his trousers that Lutes had seen on the bridge. "How's she answering her hel-lum, you ask? Right smartly, sir, right smartly.

"Mr. Murdock," the Captain went on, "you'll oblige me, sir, by taking another cast with the chip log, and Flaherty, I believe we can get that jib to draw just a mite more."

Flaherty knuckled his cap. "Aye, aye, sir. A mite more on the jib.

"All right," he roared to a man standing forward on the lee side of the galley deckhouse. "Pass the word to that gang on the forecastle to put their backs on Betty Grable and haul her up!"

"Believe it or not, Dick," said Terry Parker in his normal voice, "this idea of Murdock's and Flaherty's was a stroke of genius. We've been logging seven knots for the last two hours, and if this wind holds up, we'll make it. By golly," he added jubilantly, "I'll sail her right into Miraflores Lock."

"Some of this I can understand," said Lutes, "but what is all this Hollywood guff?"

"Murdock's idea," replied Parker. "Smart youngster! He made the crew turn in their pin-up girls and he secured one to every piece of running rigging. So, instead of saying, 'Vast heaving on the jib halyard,' which these kids of ours would never understand, we simply say, 'Hold fast to Dotty Lamour.' Easy, huh?"

Lutes nodded his head. "Yeah, Paul Jones had nothing on us, did he? And now, sir, I'm feeling a little faint, and in the words of an immortal wind-ship admiral, whose name escapes me at the moment, 'Take charge, Skipper; I'm going below.' "

For the next sixty hours the breeze remained a steady twenty knots from the northwest, but at dusk on the third day, the wind went down with the sun, and by nightfall there was an ominous quiet and a troubled sea under a moonless sky. Toward midnight there was rain, a cold, pelting, driving rain that poured in from all directions as a rising wind boxed the compass and slapped wet hands at the *Stratford's* sails.

At two bells on the morning watch the rain ceased and the wind took over, roaring in from the northeast with gale force. Caught flat aback, the *Stratford* heeled over to starboard, her lee rail awash, her grotesque sails, stiff as iron plates, straining against the homemade rigging.

If the crew had been sailors, in the meaning of the word to Michael Flaherty, it mightn't have been so bad, and though a few of them had begun to associate the halyards, braces and sheets with their shipboard meaning rather than with pin-ups of curvaceous Hollywood lovelies, they

"It just goes to show what a college education will do for a seaman."

hadn't yet learned to find the manila lines in the dark. In consequence, the mainsail exploded with the noise of an eight-inch shell, the mainyard crashed to the deck—bringing with it the radio antennas—and the jib and jigger, blowing out of their bolt-ropes, fluttered off in small bits of canvas before the face of the gale.

"And now," said Lutes, "what do we do?"

Parker gave a wry grin. "If you were a punning man I'd swear you said 'What Dewey do.' How about it, Flaherty—what would Admiral Dewey have done if he'd lost his sails and rigging?"

"Now, sir, that's a proper question," said Flaherty, balancing himself on the rolling set steel of the well-deck. "But in a manner of speaking it goes back a good deal further. When the Admiral was a youngster he sailed under Farragut. 'Best seaman I ever saw,' he used to tell me, and when he got in a tight spot like going through the minefields off Corregidor the night before we licked the Spaniards, he'd ask himself, 'What would Farragut do?' "

Flaherty paused and looked off into space. "And Davey Farragut—well, when he was knee-high to a marlinspike he was a midshipman under Porter—old *Essex* Porter, that is. And I wouldn't doubt but that when the Rebel shells were flying through the rigging down around Mobile and Davey ordered, 'Damn the torpedoes, go ahead!' he figured it was what Porter would do. And Porter—just now I can't recollect who he used to think back on; Bainbridge, maybe, but it might have been Preble or Truxtun."

"In other words," interrupted Lutes, waving an arm toward the tangled lines that cluttered the deck, "when you get around to giving an opinion as to this mess, it will be the same as getting the word from John Paul Jones, direct."

Flaherty nodded his head sagely. "That's the way it's always been in the Navy, sir. You think back on the best seaman you was ever shipmates with, and you say to yourself, 'Now what would *he* have done'?"

Ensign Murdock said, "In war the happiest inspiration is often only a recollection. . . . Napoleon," he added lamely.

The others looked at him in mild surprise.

Flaherty wrinkled his forehead. "Don't believe I ever served with him."

"This is all very enlightening," observed Lutes, "but I don't notice that it's moving us a single foot nearer Panama."

Without replying, Flaherty drove a fist into the pocket of his dungaree trousers and transferred the contents, consisting mainly of a black-bowled clay pipe and a large hunk of Navy twist, to his cap. He pulled the cap firmly on his head, close over the white fuzz that jutted fiercely from above his ears.

Then, before the startled eyes of his officers, he unbuttoned his trousers and let them fall to the deck.

"Now, sir," he said to Terry Parker, "with your permission, we'll do what Admiral Dewey would have done."

At Panama the Admiral's barge pulled alongside the *Stratford's* rusty flank. Followed by his aide, the Admiral clambered up the steel rungs of the sea-ladder.

"Well, Parker," he began, "I see you finally made— My God," he broke off to say. "What's going on here?"

Behind him his aide gave a low whistle. The Admiral swung around. "What did you say?"

"Cheesecake, sir," the aide answered, nodding toward the faded pin-up of a Hollywood beauty in a scanty bathing-suit that bore evidence of closer contact with salt water than the original would ever encounter.

The Admiral cast a quizzical look at Terry Parker. The whole atmosphere aboard the *Stratford* was part of a pattern as yet unexplained. A certain latitude on the part of the old four-stackers was accepted, within reason, but this recommissioned nondescript resembled nothing that the Admiral had seen in a lifetime of being a sailor. "Floating nudist colony" was the most apt description the Admiral could think of, with all hands in a state of near-nakedness, and the Captain, a slender sunburned figure in a cap and the briefest of shorts, looking as though he might at any moment slide to the deck in complete exhaustion.

"I used the last of my oil to bring her to the anchorage," Parker explained. "After our first set of sails blew out in the storm, there was no more canvas in the ship, so we did the best with what we had."

He motioned to Flaherty, who lifted his silver boatswain's call from the furry mat on his chest, and blew a shrill blast. "Now d'you hear there?" he shouted. "All hands stand by to make sail! Lay on to Hedy, Dotty and Betty!"

The sails rose up and hung limply in the quiet air. The Admiral's eyes rose with them, and his lips moved slowly. "Bell-bottom pants, undershirts, jumpers," he muttered. "Forty years, man and boy, afore and mast and on the quarterdeck—and I've never seen the like of it before!"

Parker followed the Admiral's gaze to the weird mosaic of sailors' and officers' clothing that formed a crazy quilt of sails at bow, mainmast, and stern. "We call them the Jumper Jib, the Bell-bottom Jigger, and the Miscellaneous Mainsail. And all I can say is—they did their duty."

The Admiral commenced to laugh, but caught himself at the sight of the strained and weary faces around him.

"It was my chief boatswain's mate's idea," continued Parker. "Finest sailor in any man's Navy."

"Don't forget Dewey, Farragut and Company," muttered Lutes *sotto voce*.

The Admiral stepped forward, both hands outstretched. "God bless my soul, it's my old shipmate, Mike Flaherty! How long has it been, Mike?"

Flaherty, a broad grin creasing his weathered face, caught the Admiral by the hands. "Must be upward of thirty years, sir. I always said you'd get ahead. You were a smart youngster, sir—a good seaman."

The Admiral accepted this praise as if it were a sword of honor received from Congress.

"A lot of water under the keel since those days, eh, Mike? You might say the Navy ain't what it used to be."

"No, sir," answered Flaherty, adding the stock reply to this standard Navy expression: "And I guess it never was! And may I present Ensign Murdock, the best engineer officer in the fleet."

Benumbed, Mr. Murdock extended a limp hand to meet the Admiral's vigorous grasp.

"He's had more experience with this type of engine," said Parker, pointing toward the sails, "than with the kind we usually use. It seems a shame to waste him below-decks."

The Admiral caught the point. It tied in, somehow, with the *Stratford's* sudden shortage of oil. "Why not let me send you another engineer officer, so this young man can be used on deck?"

A gleam of pure ecstasy crossed Mr. Murdock's face and a significant look passed between Captain and Admiral.

"A job well done," the Admiral said. "My congratulations, Parker, to you and all hands." He turned toward the waiting barge. "I'll expect you for dinner tomorrow."

"Dick, post a minimum watch," Parker ordered his Executive Officer, "and let all hands turn in."

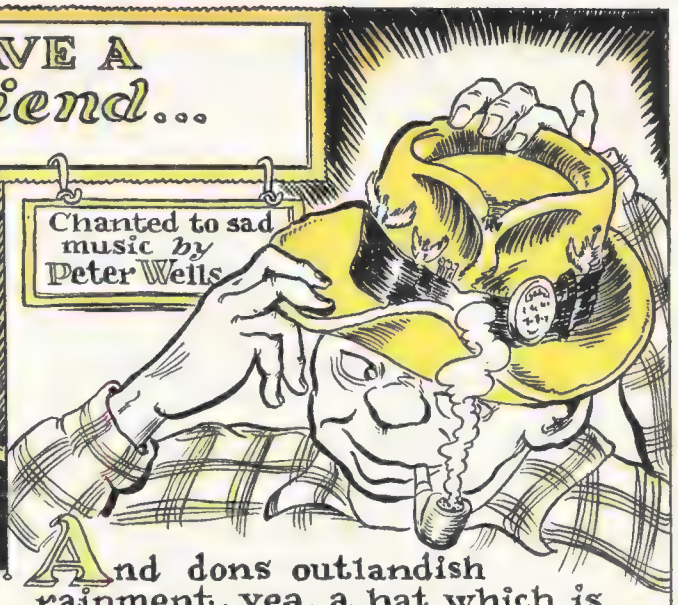
"Flaherty," said Lutes, "get the word to the crew that commencing tomorrow we try to run the *Stratford* without the personal assistance of Dewey and John Paul Jones. And something else—we wear pants! Now get those sails on deck."

The silvery notes of the boatswain's pipe sounded over the ship. "Now d'ye hear, there? For the last time: Pick up the girls. Take 'em by the hand. Walk 'em back easy!"

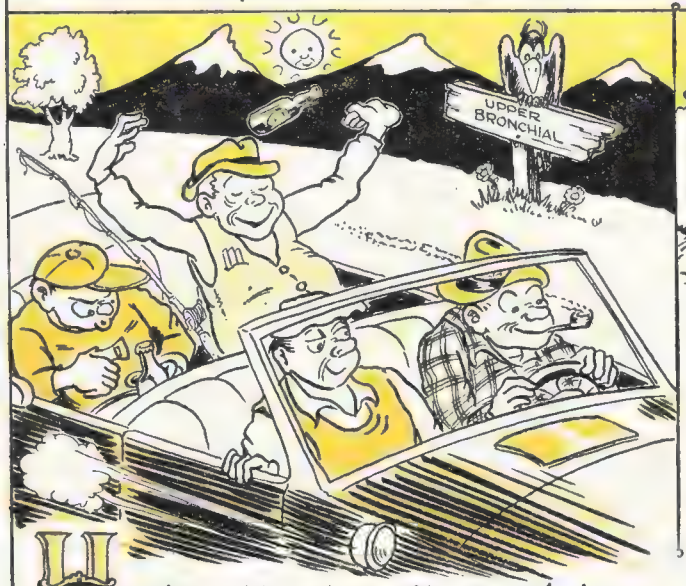
I HAVE A *Friend...*

Chanted to sad music by Peter Wells

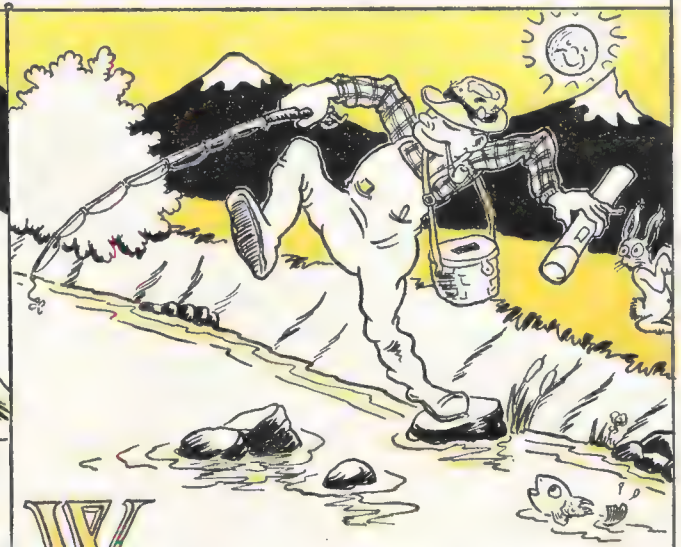
Who ariseth at un-Godly hours to the dismay of his wretched wife.



And dons outlandish rainment, yea, a hat which is out of this world.

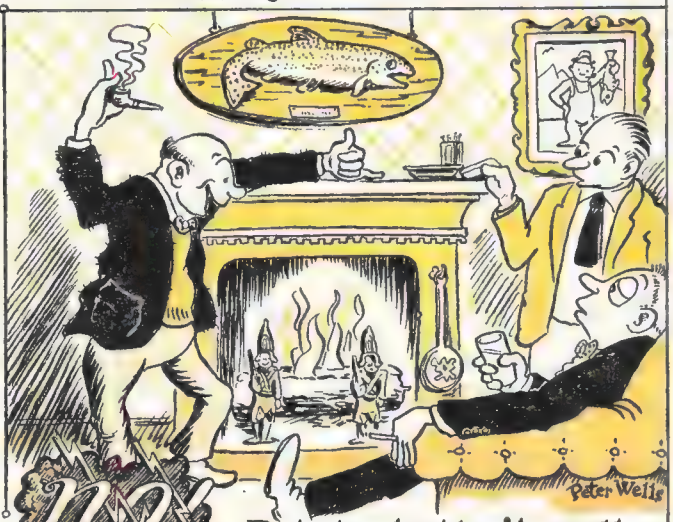


He driveth at high speed to far places with uncouth companions...



Where he encounters streams in the land, he wadeth therein, even to the slippage of his foot ....

Whenas, by his efforts, an edible-sized fish he snaggeth, doth he call in ye neighbors for a *Gourmet's pleasance* ----------?



No!...But he hath it well stuffed and hangeth it upon his wainscoting for a conversational abomination ever after. *A pox on him!*

THIS NOVELETTE OF THE WILD OLD DAYS IN THE CIRCUS SHOULD BE CLASSED AS HISTORICAL FICTION, FOR THAT EXTRAORDINARY CHARACTER POGEY O'BRIEN WAS A VERY REAL IF INCREDIBLE PERSON.

Grift

by ROBERT BARBOUR JOHNSON

THE waiter in the hotel dining-room was feeling puzzled. He couldn't quite make out the trio sitting at the small rear table—his only customers at so late an hour; long past the usual serving time in a small-town hostelry in the late 1860's. It was not the feminine member of the group, nor the young man who was obviously her husband, that was causing the waiter's handlebar mustache to quiver in perplexity. *They* were a normal-enough looking young couple: a little handsomer than most, perhaps; and curiously muscular too—you could see the girl's biceps ripple through the thin silk of her dress.

But the third of the trio—the man who was doing all the talking, and ordering—*he* was the mystery! The waiter couldn't stop staring at him. Even that circus that was coming to town tomorrow, he was certain, would have nothing stranger or more exotic among its attractions!

He was a big man, stout and heavy; unmistakably Irish, with a broad, genial face and crafty little eyes. He had a small mustache, but was otherwise clean-shaven. He obviously suffered from asthma; his wheezing was audible clear across the room, and his voice a feeble squeak that contrasted with his huge bulk. But it was his attire that was astonishing. Even in the '60's, when men still dressed more garishly than they would later on, it was hardly customary to wear a swallow-tail coat and trousers of a bright, almost sky-blue shade, and a double-breasted silk vest of such dazzling colors that it hurt the eyes.

But it was the buttons on that vest that made the waiter stare most. For every one of the double row was set with obviously real diamonds! In the center of each was a stone that must have weighed at least a couple of carats, surrounded by a circle of smaller ones; they glittered in the gaslight every time he moved. And dangling down the vest's center was the largest watch-chain the waiter had ever laid eyes on, with links of solid gold an inch square. And in each of those links, too, was set a diamond, a big four-carat one in the center, and graduating down to smaller stones at the ends. There was a watch-charm, also—a huge, glittering gold elephant, with rubies for eyes and another big diamond in its upraised trunk. And on his index finger was a huge seal ring set with a solid cluster of the sparkling white stones. The man had diamonds all over him; he was a walking jewelry store! Not for another fifteen or twenty years, when a gentleman called "Diamond Jim Brady" would come along, would he be equaled in splendor.

His manner was as flamboyant as his appearance; his gestures large and spectacular, contrasting with the piping voice. His laugh was almost a giggle, high-pitched and shrill. Altogether, he was quite the most curious specimen the waiter had ever encountered! And in his rôle at the village's only hotel and eating-place, he saw all the drummers and salesmen and "sports" that came to town. But this man was unique.

HE had ordered lavishly—the best of everything, for his two guests, and a large bottle of champagne, with which he was plying them. But he himself was drinking only water, and had eaten little. Now he was talking earnestly to them (he had a curious way of shaking his head, as he spoke, from side to side) but in such low tones that not even the waiter's straining ears could make out much of it.

"Yessir, folks," he was saying, "you couldn't do better'n to throw in your

Illustrated by MAURICE BOWER

Show Parade

lot with ol' John O'Brien! I'm the best there is; they hain't nuthin' bigger than me! I got the largest show in the whole United States, bar none. Anybody'll tell you that; just ask 'em. John O'Brien's Great American Wagon Circus; there's nothin' to top it. A hundred wagons, countin' cages! Three hundred hosses! Forty tents! An' there's no better man in the country to work for than me—I'll treat you right! I'm the most reliable showman from Coast to Coast—they'd all tell you that! If you wasn't just come over from England, an' new to this land, you'd sure have heard o' me." He paused, looking at them curiously. "Funny thing—you don't look English, neither of you. A body'd take you both for Americans."

The couple exchanged smiling glances. Then the young man said: "Well sir, the truth is, we *are* American! Or at least, our parents were. Both Mollie's and my family were United States showfolk; hers with Buckley and Wicke's Circus, and mine with Angevine. But they migrated to England before we were born, and we grew up trouping with the little English shows. But they always kept their American ways; Mollie and I were brought up to think of this as our country. I guess that's really what brought us together, being so much alike in background. And both of us have always wanted to travel with your big American shows; our parents told us great tales of them. So after we got married, and our acrobatic act became famous, we decided to come over and try our luck on this side. We thought we'd join up with Coup's circus, or Adam Forepaugh, or maybe even Barnum—"

The glittering man snapped his fingers contemptuously. "Coup? Forepaugh? Bah!" he wheezed. "Who're they? Little fellers! They ain't nowheres in a class with me! An' even old P.T.! Lordy!—He ain't no real circus man; he's jest a dime-museum proprietor, tryin' to horn in. I'll put him out o' business in a few seasons, you'll see. I'll own his show, afore I'm done! I tell you, fellows like them won't do ye no good! One season with John O'Brien's Great Wagon Show'll give ye more reputation than a dozen with them. An' I'll be glad to take you on—got the contract all writ out an' everything, legal." He flourished the document. "That's why I drove on ahead of my show, just to meet you here, an' give you this chancet to start off right. It's special, believe me; I wouldn't do it for just anybody."

"Oh, we understand that, Mr. O'Brien." It was the girl who spoke, in a soft, modulated voice. "And please don't think we're ungrateful. It's just that—well, we have to be careful, that's all! We'd never heard of your show before; being just arrived. And we've been warned that some American circuses aren't exactly—respectable. They're called 'grift shows,' I believe, and have all sorts of crime and—depravity. We wouldn't want to get mixed up in anything like that; we're reputable performers."

"Exactly! Just what I been sayin'." The bediamonded hand banged the table for emphasis. "You got a smart wife here, son; you listen to her. You're quite right, ma'am, you can't afford to git mixed up with little fly-by-night shows like Coup an' Forepaugh's. They're all crookeder'n sin! But *my* show's jest as honest as I am! Any lady would be proud to travel with it; I run it that way, straight as a die. You kin trust ol' John O'Brien, ma'am. Troupe with me, an' you won't regret it.

"Of course, you understand," he went on hastily, "I cain't afford to pay

you much, at first. I already got my performers for this season hired. You're extra; so you'll have to start small. This contract hain't for as much as you're wuth, I admit. But you're gittin' a chancet with the biggest an' best show in the whole country. An' later on, ef you make good—why, you'll find me reasonable for a raise. Start small an' work up big, that's my motto! Why, when I started out, I only had two or three wagons an' a few teams. An' look at me now!" He patted his gem-studded stomach with satisfaction. "Well, what d'you say, folks? Hey? Now will you join me?"

The young man looked at his wife. "Well, Mollie, how about it?" he asked her. "After all, we don't actually know that we could get jobs with those other shows, even if we wanted to, in mid-season. This is the first real offer we've had, even if it isn't as much as we're used to getting. Maybe we'd better take it, Mollie; what do you think?"

"I don't know—" The girl hesitated, biting her lip and frowning. Then suddenly she smiled. "Oh, well, Mr. O'Brien has an honest face! I'm sure he wouldn't advise us to do anything that wasn't for our good. And if his show is really all he says it is—All right, Mr. O'Brien, we'll accept your offer!"

"FINE! Splendid!" The stout man beamed, rubbing his hands. "That's the way I like to hear people talk! You've done the right thing, ma'am. An' to show you I appreciate it—here! I'll give you one o' the buttons off my vest, to bind the bargain." He yanked off a gleaming stud, tearing the threads, and held it out.

"Oh, no, Mr. O'Brien, I couldn't—" the girl stammered, overcome with confusion.

"Nonsense! Take it!" He forced it into her hands. "I got lots more of 'em, back on the show. I'm always givin' 'em away, as souvenirs. An' don't call me 'Mr. O'Brien,' no more. Just call me 'Pogey,' both o' you. Everybody does, on my outfit, even the canvasmen. We're all one big happy family! An' now we got to sign them contracts. Here, waiter! Waiter!" He gestured, largely. "Bring us a pen and ink. And another bottle of champagne, to celebrate!" . . .

Later they adjourned to the hotel lobby, the stout man with a hand on each of their shoulders. "Now folks," he told them, "you better git some sleep; show gits here early in the mornin'. I'll see you on the lot, hey? Have a good night's rest."

"Yessir, folks, you couldn't do better'n throw in with ol' John O'Brien! I'm the best there is."

"But—aren't you coming up too?" the girl asked. "Surely you've taken a room here, for the night?"

"Bless you, no, ma'am! What'd I want with a hotel room? I couldn't use it. Ain't slept in a bed in more'n ten years. My asthma, you know; it chokes me if I lay down. I have to sleep settin' up, in a cheer, or a buggy. I'll just take one o' these here overstuffed ones in the lobby, an' doze for a while. Then I'll git in my rig, an' drive back to meet the show, an' bring it into town. You go on up to bed, don't worry 'bout me. G'night." He waddled, wheezing, toward a seat, ignoring the frowns of the night clerk. He carefully removed his blue frock coat, folded it, and laid it on another chair. Then he sat down, relaxed and closed his eyes. Before the couple were halfway up the stairs, they could hear him snoring. . . .

"Well!" The young woman, in the privacy of their room, dissolved in giggles. "So that's the great Mr. O'Brien, our new 'guv'ner!' Did you ever see anything like him in your life, Dick? I never did. He's certainly different from English managers. A little primitive—but a hand with the ladies. You'd better watch out, or he'll steal me away from you! After all, *you* never gave me a diamond-studded button!"

Her husband chuckled. "Oh, well, this is a new country, Moll! You'll have to expect things to be different over here. Simpler—but, my God!" He was squinting at his copy of the contract, in the dim gaslight. "Look here, did you see how he signed this? With an 'X.' Do you suppose he can't even write?"

She laughed. "I know. And I noticed something else, that I bet you didn't. He may be the greatest circus owner in America, and wear clothes covered with diamonds, and all that. But when he took his coat off, down there, the seat of his pantaloons was all patched with white thread! Coarse white thread, such as they sew canvas with!"

THEY were up before dawn, next morning, eager to glimpse their first American circus. Mollie was dressed in record time, in her Paris model with the hoopskirt; and Dick had his beaver hat on, and his cane in his hand, long before she'd finished. They tiptoed downstairs and through the lobby without disturbing the sleeping clerk, for they knew there was no chance of getting breakfast at such an early hour. "It doesn't matter," Dick muttered. "They have a 'cookhouse' on American shows, you remember, that feeds their performers. We can eat out at the grounds."

They emerged from the hotel, into the dim light of street-lamps still burning along the town's single Main Street. No need to wonder where the circus lot was! Every small boy in town was awake, and hurrying toward it. The sidewalks were filled with youngsters, and not a few adults too, all moving toward the outskirts; buggies and country wagons were rumbling along the unpaved thoroughfare, heading in the same direction. All they had to do was follow. Circus Day, in the '60's, was by far the greatest event of the year in an American village!

A FEW minutes' walk brought them to open country, and an immense field. There was no sign of any show there yet, though quite a crowd of people had gathered there, in eager anticipation. Mollie, who had nervously expected to be the only woman present (as she would have been on an English circus "pitch" at four A.M.!) was relieved to find at least a dozen, mostly obviously respectable housewives, several with babies in their arms. There were even a couple of homemade snack-stands already set up, and doing a rushing business by guttering torchlight. Dick bought coffee and doughnuts for them at one, while they were waiting.

The first faint rays of the sun were gilding church steeples and roofs of distant houses, before the small boys strung out excitedly along the road that led on out into the hills began to shout: "Here she comes!" There was a faint shimmering and a dust-cloud, far off, that soon resolved into the lurching shapes of high wagons, and the broad backs of many white draft horses. Soon they were near enough to hear the unmistakable, glorious rumbling of circus-wagon wheels, the clatter of hoofs and jangle of harness and doubletrees, the shouts of the teamsters, and the roars of strange animals.

There was excitement and stir among the watchers, eager voices and comment. But this soon died, to be replaced by blank stares; and the young English couple looked at each other in bewilderment. For even at this distance, it was soon apparent that the approaching caravan was small and dingy and dejected-looking. Instead of a hundred wagons, there were only about twenty. They were all dirty and mud-plastered, shrouded in filthy canvas; the poorest gypsy-camp in Europe would have been ashamed to own them. And most of them had only two-horse teams. A few of the largest ones boasted fours; one or two had sixes, and there was one huge eight-horse hitch, to what was obviously the pole wagon.

But even these were hardly spectacular, for the horses were quite as sorry-looking as the vehicles themselves. They'd looked white only at a distance; as they plodded nearer,

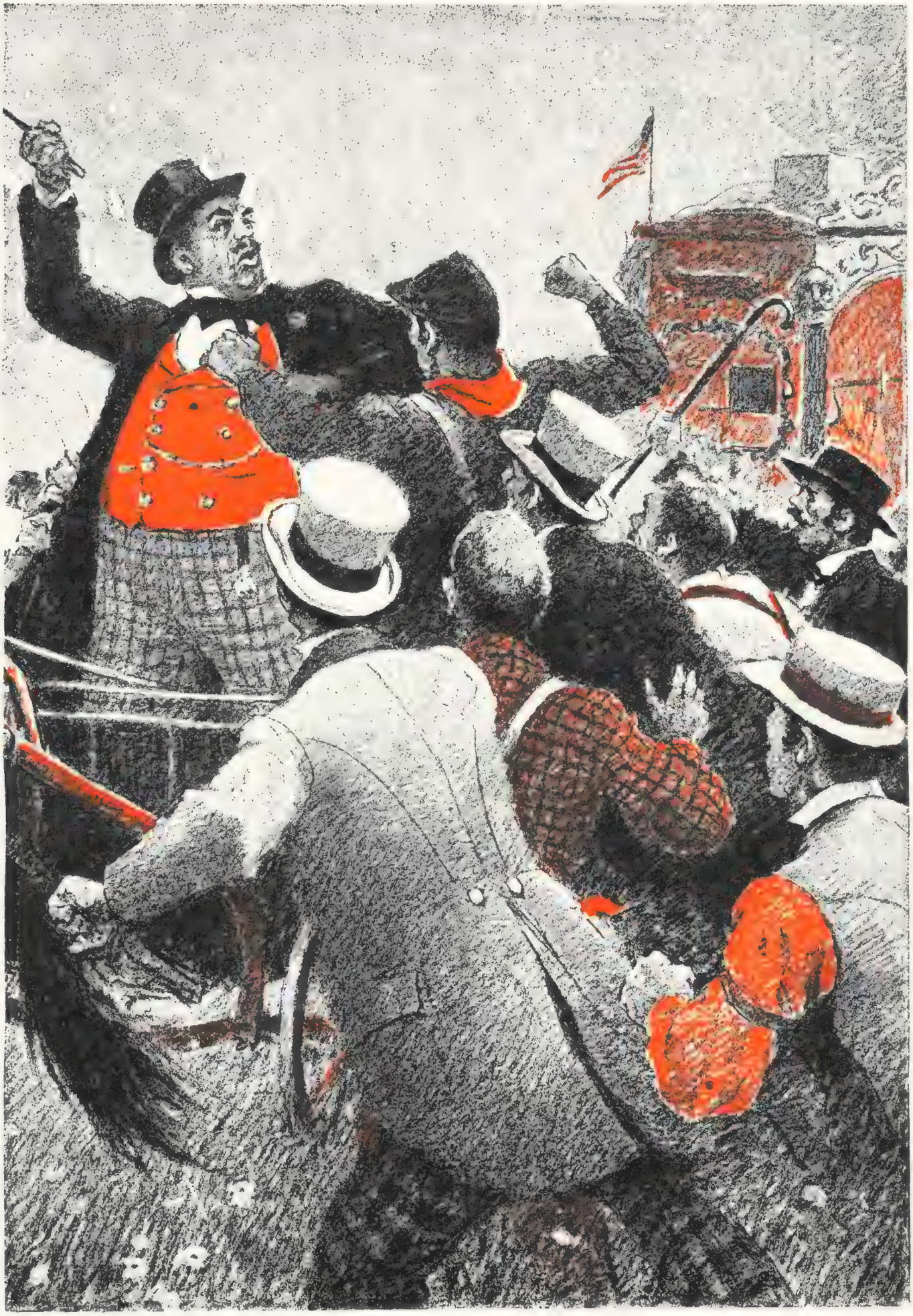
they were revealed as so dust-caked that it was hard to tell what color they were. A more dejected lot of nags could hardly have been assembled. Their harnesses, too, were covered with dirt; and they slouched along with hanging heads and dragging hoofs, seemingly in the last stages of exhaustion. They didn't even raise their heads as they turned onto the lot; and when they halted, they stood listlessly, too tired even to crop the grass. Not a few immediately lay down, in their harnesses.

The drivers and workmen riding the wagon-tops, scarecrows in ragged garments, climbed wearily down the little iron ladders to the ground, and stood yawning and staring about, drugged with sleeplessness. They then opened up the backs of the vans and began to haul out unpainted wooden seats and battered old trunks and a few small ragged tents, which they set up. Gangs of drowsy Negroes started to drive wooden stakes, swinging big wooden mauls with rhythmic pounding. A couple of weary lot bosses, hardly more prepossessing than their underlings, directed operations with bawling and arm-waving, and constant streams of blue profanity.

Everything seemed grimy, ragged and disreputable. There was one lone elephant rocking along, seeming in as bad case as the horses, led by a man on horseback. A mangy camel was tied to the back of a wagon; a couple of small cages were towed behind others; one with a lion in it, and another with some flea-bitten monkeys. There were a half-dozen extra horses, led by a groom who rode one of them. That was all the animal life visible.

There were only a handful of men with the entire caravan who were reasonably well-dressed and prosperous looking. And soon the activities of these proved to be more disturbing than the decrepit appearance of the others. For they immediately set up little "keisters" and three-legged stands, and began to operate what were obviously confidence games, even before the show was on the lot! One worked with three walnut shells and a little pea, inviting the crowd to bet which shell it was under. Another manipulated three playing-cards; a third spun a portable roulette wheel; a fourth displayed what he loudly proclaimed as "just an innocent little leather strap," but which fleeced customers just the same. Others vended bits of laundry soap, wrapped in tinfoil, as "magic spot-removers," or sold patent medicines. Still others appar-

"There's the owner of the show! Get him!" And a score of clutching hands reached.



ently did nothing, but just mingled with the crowd; Mollie's sharp eyes, however, saw one of them relieve a farmer of his wallet, and another calmly "lift" a gold watch. . . .

"Oh, heavens, Dick! This is awful!" she wailed. "Why, this is the smallest, dirtiest, most disreputable outfit I ever saw in my life. It isn't as big as any of those in England, and it's simply alive with crooks! We can't troupe with a thing like this, we just *can't*—"

"We've got to, honey!" Her husband's face was white, his jaw set. "I'm sorry, but there's no way out. We've been 'had,' there's no doubt of that! We've been tricked by an expert. That smooth-talking Mr. O'Brien, with his diamonds, has talked us into signing up with one of the littlest, crookedest shows in America—and for half what we're worth! I'll have a few words to say to that gentleman, when I meet him again! But don't you see, dear? We've *got* to go through with it, whether we like it or not. We signed a legitimate contract, perfectly legal. We can't jump it, just because we don't fancy the appearance of the troupe. We'd never be able to get another job in this country, even with honest ones, if we did a thing like that. No, we'll have to stick it out, whether we like it or not. Maybe it won't be so bad, after we get used to it—"

"Howdy, folks!" A voice spoke, at their elbows. Both swung around. It was the man who'd ridden up leading the elephant. He was standing beside them, now; his horse tied to a tree nearby, the great gray bulk of his charge rocking in the background, flapping her ears.

He was a small man, with a huge walrus mustache and a genial smile. He was quite as disreputably dressed as the rest, but there was something about him, perhaps the twinkle in his eye and the kindliness of his expression, that attracted the two at once. Despite their misery, they found themselves smiling back.

"You're the new act, ain't ye?" he asked. "The English team, the Rocketts? Proud to meet ye; I've heard of your act, even over here!" He shifted his bull-hook, and shook hands, genially. "Welcome to the show! Pogey asked me to look out for ye, while he's uptown. Well, what d'ye think of us? I hope ye ain't too disappointed. There's nothin' on earth so disillusionin' as a wagon circus in the early mornin'. 'Specially this one!" He chuckled, as at some secret knowledge. "But don't worry, it'll look better later on."

Mollie said, hesitantly: "Well, it does seem a little small—"

The little man laughed aloud. "Why, bless ye, ma'am, *this* ain't all there is to us! It ain't even half! This is only the first section, the baggage train, that carries the tents an' heavy stuff. It goes on ahead, to set up before the rest gits here. There's more'n sixty wagons still comin' in the second section, and two hundred more horses. And then there's the wild animals, an' the ring stock, an' all the performers—"

They stared at him eagerly. "Then—these aren't performers?" Dick Rockett indicated the stumbling shapes about them.

The little man looked shocked. "Gawdamighty, no! These is jest roustabouts an' lot help, that do the heavy work. Lots of 'em ain't even troupers—they're jest floaters we pick up, from town to town. I'm the only performer travels with the first section—an' that's jest on account o' the bull. My name's Conklin, George Conklin. I train the lions an' wild animals for Pogey, an' I handle the elephants—"

"What elephants?" Mollie asked, bewildered. "I only see one."

"Oh, this is only our workin' bull, ma'am, old Queen Anne. She moves with the heavy wagons, to push 'em out of the mud, if they get stuck. Come here, Annie, old gal, an' meet the folks!" She shambled forward, a huge old beast, wearing a tattered canvas blanket. Conklin patted her trunk, raising small clouds of dust from the grimy gray hide. "She's a nice old bull, but she ain't the only elephant we got, by a long shot. There's a whole herd of 'em comin,' in the parade section, includin' a tusker, with six-foot ivories. But Queen Anne's my favorite; she's the first elephant I ever trained. Don't look like much now, I grant ye. She's all dirtied up; I spent ten minutes throwin' dust over her, at the edge o' town, jest so's she'd look her worst—"

"You did *what?*" The two were utterly confused, now.

"Why, sure. Jest like the teams an' wagons. Drivers druv 'em through a creek, to git 'em wet; then plastered everything with dirt. We always do that, every time we come into a new town. Same's we wear our oldest clothes, an' don't shave. Towners is awful dumb. They think jest 'cause somethin's dirty, it ain't no good. It's easy to fool 'em.

"But you look at them hosses, close!" He pointed to the nearest team. "Forget about their bein' a little thin an' pulled out—all wagon-show stock gits like thet, haulin' over bad roads. But look carefully, an' you'll see they're fine stock, underneath that dirt. All blooded Percherons! No circus owner in the country's got finer animals than ol' Pogey; he used to be a stagedriver, afore he got his show; an' no man livin' knows hosses better, or kin beat him in a hoss-trade. He swaps all the time, an' always has the best. Wait'll you see our ring stock an' ponies. More'n fifty of 'em, the most elegant in the business!

"An' as for the wagons—well, look fer yourself!" He walked over to a van, and lifted the grimy canvas covering for an instant. Mollie gasped, and clutched her husband's arm, for beneath that dingy shroud the vehicle was a mass of gold-leaf and bright paint, with huge mirrors on its sides, and carved figures holding up its cornices. No circus wagon she'd ever seen in Europe was half as dazzling.

"Ye see?" Conklin came back to them, chuckling. "We cain't always judge things by their outsides! Our wagons is just as good as our stock. You wait'll you see our big bandwagon—fifteen feet high an' twenty feet long, all carvin's an' gold-work; an' with a team o' ten cream-colored hosses drawin' it. An' there's nigh fifty cages o' animals, all just as fancy. We got a rhinoceros, the only one in the whole country, in a cage so big it takes twelve Percherons to pull. We got a hippopotamus, an' a giraffe. There's sixteen camels, seven zebras, an' I don't know how many led stock; an' nigh a hundred wild animals. I work ten lions, an' a leopard, in my ring act alone! We got the best menagerie on the road; not even Barnum can top it. Our animal tent'll take up almost half this here lot, when we set it up. An' our big top has the largest ring in the country, an' seats three thousand people. Its poles are higher'n trees. These little tents you see are only work-tops, and so on. We put the big ones up later on."

"But I don't understand!" Mollie fairly wailed. "Why all this masquerade? Why do you want to look small, and dirty, and poverty-stricken, if you're really a big show?"

Conklin guffawed, slapping his thigh. "Why, so's old Pogey kin get the license down, o' course!" he explained delightedly. "We always play that trick, every time we come into a new place. Those we been in afore, o' course, they know how big we are, and it won't work. But in a new one, it's easy. The first section rolls in all dirty an' sorry-lookin', like we was on our last legs. Then Pogey, he goes to the authorities—wearin' his old clothes too, sometimes—an' he tells 'em that he's broke an' ready to fold up; the whole show's liable to be stranded on their hands. He's convincin', all right. Why, I seen that old hypocrite cry real tears, lots o' times! They always reduce the fee 'way down; lots o' times they let him show for noth-

in'! Then Pogey comes back to the lot, rigs himself out in thet gaudy outfit, the rest o' the circus rolls in, in all its glory, an' Pogey laughs himself sick over how he put it over on the Towners!

"Oh, he didn't invent the dodge. Lots o' the little circuses use it, all the time. But we're the only big one that does! The others'd think it was beneath their dignity. But Pogey, he ain't *got* no dignity; not when it comes to chiselin' a few extra bucks, he ain't. He's the beatin'est, that old crook! He'd rather steal a dime, than make a dollar honest, any day!

"He don't *have* to do things like that—he's got plenty o' money. But—jewed you down on your contract, didn't he? Got you to sign up for a lot less'n you'd figgered on?"

"Yes," they admitted ruefully, in unison, "he did."

"Sure he did! He does that to everybody. We got some o' the most famous circus acts in the world workin' for our show; an' ain't one of 'em gittin' what they ought to. It's that durn' diamond vest that does it; it sorta hypnotizes you. Afore you know it, you're signed up for less! He always wears that vest whenever he hires a new act; whenever he puts it on, we know he's fixin' to gyp somebody!

"Oh, he's a character, old Pogey O'Brien is. Never been anything like him in show business afore, an' never will be again, I reckon. No sir, when they made him, they broke the mold! He's the crookedest showman in the business. He's worth more'n a million dollars, yet he'll chisel his lowest canvasman out'n a dollar, an' chuckle over it! If he cain't hook you on salary, he'll keep on, an' keep on until he beats you some other way. He just ain't happy when he ain't gyppin' somebody. Seems like crookedness is his religion! He's as proud of it as other folks are of bein' honest.

"An' yet, he's a remarkable man—no doubt of thet. You know how he got his start, don't ye? He was jest a stagedriver in the East, afore the railroads come. His passengers'd give him cigars, all the time; an' instead o' smokin' 'em, Pogey'd save 'em till he got a boxful, an' then resell 'em! He kept that up until he actually had money enough to buy some hosses an' a coach, an' start his own stage-line. Then a little circus started up in his town, an' hired his teams to transport it. By the end of the season, he was a partner, an' inside three years he owned it. Then he built up thet little wagon-show until it's just about the biggest in America. Not bad, for a feller who never had no education. Pogey cain't read or write, but he's hell on figgers! He kin add up the day's take in his head, an' never be a cent off! You gotta admire him; there's no gittin' around it.

"An' he ain't such a bad feller to work fer, outside'n his crookedness. Nice an' pleasant, no airs about him. We all call him Pogey to his face, even the roustabouts. If anyone's sick or hurt, he'll spend his last cent takin' care of 'em, an' seein' they're doctored right. He 'carries' workmen through winters, like most owners don't—lets 'em sleep at winter quarters an' even feeds 'em. No animals are better treated than his; he loves animals, an' kids too. An' he's the durndest most respectable cuss, in his private life. Don't smoke an' don't drink; he won't tolerate no drunks on his show. An' nobody's ever seen him make eyes at a woman. He won't have cooch shows, or nothin' immoral in his sideshows, like most do. He guards the reputations of his women performers like a church deacon. It's funny—you might almost say he was a moral man, 'cept fer money matters!

"Oh, he's a character, if they ever was one. It's what's kept me on the show all these years, jest seein' what he'll do next! I could make twice as much with others; I've had lots o' offers. But he kinda fascinates me. Wears all them diamonds, an' fancy clothes, all the time—an' yet when he tore his pants last month, he just had one o' the workmen sew it up with white canvas thread. Stands out like the Northern Lights, every time he takes his coat off! But it's good enough fer them gillies an' rubes, he says—they don't know the difference, anyway! No sir, there ain't never been nobody like him! Some day I may write a book, an' put him in it. I got one all planned out in my mind, called 'The Ways of the Circus.' Mebbe I'll git around to writin' it, one o' these days, when my troupin' days are over. An' I'll git him down, for posterity!"

He beamed at them happily.

Mollie was smiling back, looking more cheerful. "Well, Mr. Conklin, I'm certainly glad we talked to you," she told him with cordiality. "You've relieved our minds, a lot. We were pretty unhappy, before. But if Mr. O'Brien and his show are really as you say they are—why, it makes a lot of difference. Trouping with them might even be fun." Then her face fell. "If only it wasn't for all these crooks, these confidence-men—"

George Conklin's smile vanished; his jaw set. "Yes ma'am," he said soberly. "I know just how you feel, 'bout them grifters. I feel the same way, an' so does every other respectable performer. We're honest, hard-workin' people; we risk our lives to make folks happy, an' entertain 'em. We ain't crooks, an' yet, we get the reputation of bein', 'count o' them durn' grifters. It's a cryin' shame, ma'am; an' it hadn't ought to be. But it's everywhere, in this country, make no mistake 'bout that. They ain't a circus in the nation that ain't got grift, these days! Why, even Barnum's got it on his show, though he won't admit it. If you're goin' to troupe in America today, you gotta make up your mind to take the grift. All of us have to, though don't none of us like it!

"Early American circuses didn't have it, at all. Why, even in my father's day, most troupes were straight as strings. But around the '50's, it started to creep in; an' now it's universal. The Towners began it, I admit; they'd cheat us on licenses, an' all kinds of holdups; so it was only natural that the shows should start swindlin' a little in return. But now it's got out of hand. 'Tain't only short-changin' no more; it's pick-pockets, an' robbers, an' every kind of crime an' lowness. 'Course, they don't steal from *us;* that's one thing. Why, I dropped my wallet the other day, an' one o' them grifters walked three miles to return it to me! They got their own code o' honesty; an' stealin' from the show, or anyone on it, is jest taboo. I dunno, I guess it takes all kinds to make a world! They're a sign o' the times, you might say. The whole country's crooked right now, seems like. Look at the railroad swindles, an' the minin' swindles out West. An' all them goings-on in Washington; Oake Ames, an' the 'Credit Mobilier' steal, an' all that stuff. It's jest a crooked era, that's all; an' it's only natural that the circus should be affected by it too!

"But it won't last; you'll see. It'll straighten out; at least, the circus will. It's too decent an' fine an institution to have this crooked stuff tied to it. Already some o' the better owners are gettin' sick of it, they tell me. It's only a question o' time until one of 'em cleans up an' throws out the grift, an' puts out a honest show like they had in the old days. An' when that happens, the rest of 'em'll have to follow suit; they won't be able to stand the competition. Why, I bet ye inside o' fifty years there won't be a grift show left! But that won't do you an' me no good. We got to troupe in the '60's, not the future! An' that means grift, on any show ye travel with, over here; that's all there is to it!

"Of course,"—the irrepressible twinkle came back, and the grin—"I got to admit this show's the crookedest of 'em all. With old Pogey runnin' it, it'd have to be! We got more grifters, an' more different kinds o'

swindlin', than the others ever heard of. Why, we got the 'clothesline privilege' men who go through back alleys an' steal the wash off lines, while housewives is watchin' the parade, out front. We got pickpockets, an' bunco steerers, an' whatnot, till ye cain't rest. An' our ticket sellers don't git salaries at all; they *pay* for the privilege o' sellin'! Our head ticket man, Steve Williams, gives Pogey a thousand dollars a year; an' makes it back, an' a fortune more, short-changin'.

"But that don't affect people like you an' me none. Us performers lead jest the same kinda lives we always did, perfectly straight an' honest. The grifters won't bother you much, after you git used to 'em; you won't hardly notice they're with the show; 'cept when there's a beef or a clem. They don't usually operate as openly as they're doin' this mornin', or as early. Pogey wouldn't let 'em, if he wasn't still uptown. I dunno what's takin' him so long to git back; it's makin' me a leetle nervous! It's dangerous fer 'em to run wide open like this, 'fore the rest o' the show gits here. If trouble should start, there's only a few o' the boys to handle it— Oh, my Gawd! There goes somethin', right now! Better git your wife back between them wagons, Mr. Rockett; there's gonna be a fight, sure!"

THERE was, obviously. A group of tough-looking men were milling around a couple of the game-operators, shaking fists, and shouting loudly that they had been swindled. Other men quickly gathered around them, while the women and children hurried for the street. Suddenly a "keister" went down; a voice shrieked wildly: "Hey, Rube!" Instantly all the sleepy-looking circus men came to life. They produced soiled white handkerchiefs, which they knotted about their right arms. Thus uniformed and identified to each other, they snatched tent-stakes, mallets and clubs, and flung themselves into the milling mob. The grifters, too, hastily dismantled their paraphernalia, produced somewhat cleaner handkerchiefs, and dived into the fray with brass knuckles and blackjacks. The man with the "innocent little leather strap" quickly tied a rock onto one end of it, and swung it like a club; his means of livelihood was also his weapon of defense! Voices rose, "Hey, Rube—Hey, Rube!" and more authoritative shouts: "All right—off the lot, you Towners! Everybody not with the show, off the lot!"

Back and forth the battle raged, in the clear morning sunlight, against the peaceful setting of the little town. Fists smashed; clubs thumped; shouts and curses rose, and a cloud of dust. Tents were knocked down, guy-ropes cut, and wagons overturned. Draft horses snorted and reared in harness, but stood firm. No drivers held them; the teamsters were fighting too; but evidently the beasts were as experienced as the men.

AS for George Conklin, he'd dived in at the very beginning of the fray, swinging his elephant-hook as a club with both hands, doing great damage despite his small size. And Dick Rockett, after watching for a few minutes, had murmured, "Excuse me for a bit, darling!" tied on his own immaculate handkerchief, picked up a tent-stake and charged in also. Mollie called, "Naturally, dear!" after him. She was standing in the open, disdaining the shelter of the wagons; brickbats and rocks were whizzing all about her, unheeded, while she watched the fight with sparkling eyes.

After all, this was no new experience to her; even respectable English circuses had gang fights occasionally—she'd been in plenty of them. But she'd never in her life seen anything to equal the fighting fury of these American showmen! Ragged and sluggish scarecrows they might look; but they battled with courage, and with a skill and discipline that no professional army could have bettered. Though outnumbered four or five to one, the outcome of the conflict was never for one moment in doubt. Slowly, irresistibly, they were clearing the lot of Towners, driving them in a disorganized, defeated mass toward the village.

Then, in the middle of it all, she saw Pogey O'Brien drive up in a pony-cart, with a scowling worried look on his face. His horse, a magnificent trotter that no amount of dirt could disguise, had carried him almost into the midst of the crowd before he realized what was going on. The crowd recognized him; there were immediate shouts of, "There's the owner of the show! Get him!" and a dozen town toughs swarmed toward the vehicle. Pogey O'Brien stood up, brandishing his buggy whip and shouting, slashing at faces. But a score of clutching hands seized him, and dragged him over the wheels to the ground. He lay there like some landed sea monster, waving fat arms and wheezing helplessly, while kicks and blows rained on his body.

Most of the circus people were too busy with their own fighting to perceive his plight; and Pogey, on his back, could not call for help—he only choked. But there was one who

Queen Anne bore down on the crowd, trumpeting loudly. And the Towners' nerves gave way at the sight.

noticed—Dick Rockett! Suddenly he appeared from nowhere, his white handkerchief gleaming like the plume of Navarre on a still unspotted sleeve, and brandishing his tent-stake like a veteran. He charged into the crowd, smashing them back with fury. There was only one of him, and many of them; but mere tavern loafers had little chance against an acrobat's trained muscles, backed by a four-foot, iron-tipped wooden club. In a moment he'd reached the fallen man, was straddling his body, and cleared a wide circle round him with the flailing stake. And abruptly Mollie appeared beside him, a mænad Mollie with silken skirts tucked up, a torn strip of petticoat about her arm in lieu of a handkerchief, and wielding a huge wooden tent-mallet with both her dainty hands! The famous acrobatic team of the English Rocketts united, in a new rôle! They faced the mob together, and it gave back slowly, nursing broken heads and bruised shoulders.

How long they could have held it at bay, of course, was a question. But suddenly there was assistance. There came a wild yell: "Look out! The elephant! The elephant!" And the toughs, looking around, beheld old Queen Anne bearing down on them at a shambling charge. In her trunk she held a truly terrifying weapon, a twenty-foot quarter-pole; swinging it from side to side, as if she were reaping wheat. George Conklin was stride her great neck, riding her like a jockey, urging her on with his hook.

She bore down on the crowd, trumpeting loudly. And the Towners' nerves gave way at that sight; they might fight people, but they weren't going to fight elephants! They streamed off the lot in a disorganized tide, raced toward the village. Queen Anne pursued them down the road, waggling her wrinkled rear insultingly as she herded them along with the pole. They all vanished in a cloud of dust; the circus people looking after them, grinning. Then they mopped their brows, untied their handkerchiefs and drifted apathetically back to their tasks, as if nothing at all had happened.

Dick and Mollie had Pogey O'Brien on his feet now, and propped against a cart wheel—they brushed him off and wiped blood off his face, while he wheezed incoherently. Meanwhile they scolded each other in low tones: "Darling, I *told* you to stay out of this! Why, you might have got hurt!" And "Oh, nonsense. Do you think you can make a sissy out of me, just because you married me, Dick Rockett? I'm as good a fighter as you are, any day!"

"Hi, Pogey, air ye all right?" Queen Anne came shambling back onto the lot, still carrying her pole. Conklin slid off her head, and hurried up. "It's all over; I run them Towners clean back to their main stem; they won't bother us no more. It's lucky I taught old Annie that trick; it's come in handy, lots o' times. Ye ain't hurt, are ye? You're lookin' awful serious, fer just a little clem—"

O'Brien found his voice, at last. "Me? Lordy, no!" he squeaked. "Take more'n a bunch o' dern' gillies an' rubes to hurt me—though I was in bad shape when you pulled me out, sir and ma'am; an' I'm beholden to ye." He swept off his battered plug hat and bowed to them ceremoniously; though he still had to hold on to the wagon to keep from falling. But he was a showman, to the last.

"No, I wasn't worryin' about that beef," he went on. "We got more serious problems, Conklin, than jest a few suckers squawkin' 'bout bein' trimmed! That's what kep' me so long uptown; I didn't even try to git the license down, today. You know what's happened? There's a Sheriff here, from that town we skinned so bad two days ago. Seems they swore out warrants, an' got out an attachment on the hull show! One o' the deppities spilled it to me—for a ten-spot. They're fixin' to grab the whole outfit. Mebbe they was the ones who put the Towners up to that fight. They might have."

Conklin whistled, softly. "Wow! That *is* bad!" he agreed. "I never knowed they could do thet; they never done it afore. You don't suppose suckers has developed legal rights, all at once, do you?" He winked at the Rocketts.

"Looks like it!" O'Brien shook his head, quite seriously. "I dunno what the country's comin' to!" He brooded over the injustice of it all.

"Well, we better tear down an' git out o' here, *pronto!*" the animal-man declared. "We cain't show in this town, that's certain!"

"No use! They'd grab us the moment we started to move out; circus wagons don't move fast. They're jest waitin' until the rest o' the show gits here, 'fore they move in. They know how big we are; we cain't fool 'em. They'll grab us, all right, after parade."

"Well, couldn't we send a feller on horseback, to head off the second section, so's they won't walk into the trap?" Conklin suggested.

"Too late!" Pogey pointed up the road. There was a faint shimmering up there, and a sound of distant music. "They're a-comin' in, now. They'll have washed up at the crick, an' be in parade formation. No way o' stoppin' 'em now. But don't worry. I ain't licked yet! I got a trick or two up my sleeve. The county line's only two miles beyond the village; I found that out. Now, here's what we do! Have the boys load up everything they kin, without bein' noticed. They ain't set up much yet, 'count o' the fight. Git most of it back in the wagons. Leave them little tents standin', for a blind; they ain't no good, anyway. But load the rest. Then git the wagons ready fer parade. An' remember, everything goes into the line today, even the pole wagon. Let's go!"

Ensued then feverish activity, while the distant music drifted nearer and nearer, in gay accompaniment. Roustabouts hastily reloaded vans, then garbed themselves in a variety of glittering uniforms and climbed atop the wagons. Teamsters and grooms produced currycombs and buckets of water and fell to work on the horses. The dried mud easily scraped off, revealing shimmering shapeliness underneath; and wet rags worked wonders on the harness, which emerged as handsome and brass-studded. Chicken-feather plumes of many colors appeared, and were thrust into headstalls; there were not quite enough to go around, since many of the teams did not ordinarily parade; but this would not be noticed.

Meanwhile, the dirty covers were stripped off the wagons, and all the wonders of carving and gilt and oil-painting that adorned them were displayed. Nearly all of the O'Brien vehicles were handsome enough to get by as parade-wagons, especially with flags and bunting fluttering from their tops, and costumed roustabouts riding on them. Only the big pole van, with the long blue center-poles hanging on its sides, looked a little strange. But its mighty eight-team, dazzling in plumed whiteness, would get it by.

Dick and Mollie Rockett, seated atop one of the carved vehicles with borrowed parade robes over their street clothes, could see all these preparations, and were properly impressed. They could see, also, the road beyond filling with a glittering procession that stretched away almost to the horizon; the mighty second section was rolling up; it was all George Conklin had said of it, and as clean and dazzling as the other had been dingy. The huge band-wagon rumbling in the lead on gilded, six-foot wheels, gaudy with its gold-leaf work and its "twice-life-size" carvings of gladiators and wild beasts; with a dozen musicians in gold helmets tootling and banging on its high seats, the superb ten-horse hitch of white-maned cream horses marching proudly ahead of it. And behind was the long, long line of cages stretching away, cavaliers with plumes and spears accompanying them, and clowns in carts, beautiful ladies on white horses, camels and

zebras—the whole splendor of an American circus on parade.

Pogey O'Brien, who'd ducked into one of the small tents to clean up now emerged in all his diamond-studded finery, and took his seat in his refurbished cart which had been cleaned and polished by the workmen while he was changing. He swung the beautiful trotter, stepping high, in front of the band-wagon, amid outriders who blew on gold trumpets and waved gay banners, and drove off proudly toward the village. And behind him the other vehicles, one by one, rolled into the procession and joined it, as it passed, until there were none left on the lot. Even the grifters, in their handsome surreys, were along.

Through the town they passed, along the winding unpaved Main Street. The inhabitants, crowding the sidewalks, gaped at them in amazement and delight, their recent battle forgotten. They applauded the band wagon, the great twenty-foot rhinoceros van with its amazing twelve-horse hitch; the hippopotamus den labeled "BEHEMOTH OF HOLY WRIT," with eight horses; and the giraffe cage, with its top opened up so its long-necked occupant could protrude his curious horned head. They gaped at George Conklin, in tights and holding a whip, standing in a cage of ten great male lions; and at old Queen Anne, wearing a scarlet-and-gold blanket and howdah, shuffling along leading the elephant line, even the male with the gleaming ivory tusks. They laughed at the clowns, and gawked at the girls, and were utterly delighted; and if an occasional utilitarian-looking vehicle showed up in the line, they did not notice.

IT took the procession almost an hour to pass through the village; and after the last of it had passed, they waited to see it come back again, and enjoy its glory a second time, as it returned to the lot. They waited a long time, before it gradually dawned on them that it wasn't coming back, that it had rolled right on down the highway, and vanished from sight. And when they drifted out to the lot it had left, all they found were a few small and empty tents flapping in the breeze. By the time the authorities, realizing at last what had happened, had lashed foaming buggy-horses in pursuit, they were too late. They were just in time to see the last wagons rumbling safely across the line into the next county, and out of their jurisdiction. Pogey O'Brien had outsmarted them again.

As, indeed, for the next thirty years, Pogey would continue to outsmart them. . . .

It was some hours later. The residents of the next hamlet, some twenty miles away, though amazed at seeing the circus arrive a full day ahead of schedule, had responded nobly. The tents were up; flags were flying; the band playing gayly; and a great crowd was massed on the Midway, waiting for the opening of the great show, only a few hours later than usual.

Behind one of the carved ticket-wagons (whose operators were short-changing liberally, to make up the deficit, great mounds of currency piling up at their feet), Pogey O'Brien stood talking earnestly to Dick and Mollie Rockett. The diamonds on his "hiring vest" twinkled merrily, but his great moon face was solemn and serious.

"So that's how it is, folks!" he finished. "I gypped you to blazes on our deal; I admit it. I always do that, I guess you've heard; it's a kind of mania with me. But your savin' my life puts a different complexion on matters. I may be low, but I ain't that low! So I'm tearin' up that contract, I got you to sign. You're free to go, to Barnum, or Forepaugh, or any show you like, where they'll treat you right an' pay you what you're worth. This circus ain't for you; it's too wild an' rough for a real lady an' gent, like you are. I knew that all along; I just tricked you into joinin', 'cause I liked you. But now you're free to go, with my blessin'!

"O' course," he added wistfully, "if ye *could* see your way to stayin' on, I'd be glad to sign a new contract, at twice the money!"

The two young people exchanged glances, beaming. Then: "Oh, I think we'll stay, Mr. O'Brien!" Dick said easily. "After all, we're beginning to like this show, aren't we, Mollie?"

"Of course!" Her lovely eyes sparkled. "After all, where else could we ever have so much fun?"

"That's fine! That's fine!" Pogey pumped both their hands, eagerly. "That was what I was hopin' you'd say!

"I'll have the new contract drawed up, right away. Twice the money, an' anything else you want; just ask it! No more trickin', I promise you!"

"Well—" Mollie hesitated. "There is one thing, Mr. O'Brien. All this short-changing, and the confidence games—I don't like them, of course, and never will. But I'm beginning to see that after all, they're just a game of wits—"

"O' course! O' course!" Pogey said eagerly. "Why, we always give the suckers back their money, if they ketch us—"

"Yes, I can see that." Mollie laid a hand on his arm. "But these pickpockets, Mr. O'Brien; there *can't* be any excuse for them; that's outright stealing! Can't you get rid of them? After all, a big man like you, and a show as fine and wonderful as yours, doesn't need things like that, to make money!"

Pogey O'Brien looked down at her pretty, pleading face for a moment. And a sentimental look came over his own.

"By thunder, you're right!" he exclaimed, striking his great fist into his palm. "You've convinced me, ma'am. Them pickpockets ain't fittin' for a show like mine. I'll run 'em off, right now; you can see me do it! I'll make a speech from the wagon here, to the crowd—an' I'll make it every day from now on, I promise! They'll make it impossible fer any pickpocket to operate on this lot again. You just listen, an' you'll hear me do it."

He turned and climbed, with much wheezing and puffing, the little iron ladder to the top of the ticket-wagon. He faced the great crowd, and spread out his arms to still its clamor. He was a dramatic figure, diamonds sparkling, against the background of the gay Midway.

"Ladies and gentlemen!" his high voice squeaked, his head shaking earnestly. "As the owner of this here circus, I want to warn you to look out fer pickpockets. The show does its best to keep them away, but sometimes they do get on the grounds. I don't want any of you to lose your money while comin' to my show; so I'm tellin' you about it, an' givin' you a chance to look out. Watch your pocketbooks!"

A thousand faces stared up at him. A thousand hands groped for wallets or rolls of bills, to make sure that they were still there, and guard them vigilantly in the future.

"There! You see?" Pogey descended from the wagon, flushed with virtue. "Now they're all warned. No pickpocket can operate, from now on. Does that satisfy you?"

"Of course!" Mollie beamed. She flung her arms about him, and kissed his cheek, in her delight. "You won't regret it, Mr. O'Brien, really you won't. Honesty is the best policy!" Then: "And now come on, Dick. We've got to change into our costumes, for the performance! There isn't much time. Hurry!"

THEY ran lightly away across the lot toward the dressing-tent, hand in hand. Pogey O'Brien stared after them, the sentimental look still on his face, and fingering his cheek absently until they had disappeared quite out of sight.

Then he turned toward a little group of furtive-faced men lurking near the wagon. "All right, boys," he said briskly, rubbing his hands. "Now you know jest where the suckers' money is—you seen 'em reach for it. Go to work!"

Watch the Angles,

"GO in and warm your paws, dog!" Pavel growled to himself when he saw Ivan Krotkikh come up the path from the ice-covered river and go into the railroad station. But he retreated behind a switchman's shanty, pulling his small wooden sledge out of sight. Sooner or later the railroad inspector would be after him again, and he didn't want to remind the official that there might be something suspicious about one Pavel Sulukhia—*you cannot stop a bird flying over you, but you need not stand under his nest.*

He stamped his feet, cold in the felt boots even through three pairs of *Amerikanski* woolen socks. The temperature at the Arkhangelsk depot, across the Dvina River to the west of the city, had dipped to twenty below zero, and the wind was a chill knife lancing at exposed skin in the gray Arctic dawn. Pavel pulled the fur ear-flaps forward on his cheeks and looked toward the south. A thread of smoke formed a darker smear against the dull dishwater sky.

He muttered cheerfully, watching the threads of mist formed by the warm air from his lips: "The Molotovsk local is on time again. The engineer must have a new girl in town."

The high-stacked engine came into sight at the far end of the freight yards and slowly dragged its six coaches along the broad-gauge tracks to the station. Pavel walked beside the third car until it stopped, pulling his sledge behind him.

"Hello," the brakeman said shortly. He dumped a box on Pavel's sledge and hurried back along the train. Pavel quickly pulled the frayed blanket over the box and trudged back to the Intourist car on the rear. He looked cautiously at the station, but Ivan Krotkikh was not in sight, and no other officials were coming toward him. He sighed with relief.

"Carry your baggage?" Pavel put the question in English to a British Merchant Navy lieutenant who had descended to the packed snow and stood looking around with a puzzled expression.

"Where's Arkhangelsk?" the Lieutenant asked. He was a young man, about Pavel's age, with bright red cheeks and youthful eyes. They were wide-set and friendly, very trusting. Pavel sighed. The Britisher was the kind of lad he wouldn't cheat, although he derived real pleasure from overcharging hagglers.

Pavel told him: "The city is across the river, Leftenant. It is three miles to the hotel. I will carry your bag and show you the way for five shillings."

"That's a lot of money."

"It is a fair price. We have to cross on the ice. Sometimes those who do not know the way fall in."

The officer shrugged. "All right. Lead the way."

"Just a minute."

Pavel spoke almost perfect English, in the precise tones of one who has learned through association with the British. He accosted three more foreign officers, making the same contract for service. When a party of Russian officials passed, he bent over his sledge, very busy with the lashings.

The passengers followed Pavel past the station. He threaded his way through the crowd, moved a few yards toward the river, then stopped as Ivan Krotkikh came up beside him. Pavel saw the blue uniform, the pistol in its closed, heavy leather holster, and the ornate brown and white boots. He kept his eyes down.

"Your papers," Krotkikh demanded in Russian.

Pavel turned to the men behind him. *"Propoosk,"* he said. Then in crude English: "Papers. Passes."

"Not theirs," Ivan said irritably. "Yours. Show me your papers."

PAVEL nodded and produced his book and pass. Ivan read slowly; *"Pavel Sulukhia. Construction worker. Born . . ."* He mumbled Pavel's description and history, then handed back the book, but did not step aside. "You last worked at Akmolinsk in 1942. You have been idle a long time."

"Yes. Idle for five years fighting all the way to Berlin. I'm going back to Akmolinsk when my back is well. There's a piece of German steel in it yet."

"You haul that sledge easily for a man with such severe wounds."

"I do what I can; everyone should."

From the corner of his eye Pavel saw Rumyantsev, the trainman, approaching. "Shall we turn?" the railroader asked Krotkikh loudly. "Where do you want the mail car?"

Ivan preferred to consider one thing at a time. He waved Pavel away and walked off with Rumyantsev. Pavel hurried down the trail to the river. Rumyantsev had some sense and courage, at that. But it was too close. He might have to find himself another city if Krotkikh kept it up. He had no intention of going back to Akmolinsk. Of course his back felt fine—had been well for a year; but he found it more satisfying, and exciting, to live as he pleased. And comfortable, too. He made more money than some party members.

IN single file the passengers crossed the Dvina, jumping across the open water at the center of the ice pack with a few boards for support. The long procession looked like a black snake crawling across the snow and ice. Pavel shepherded his charges safely up the far bank and along the broad avenue to the Intourist Hotel. They paid him and hurried into the warmth of the building, all except the red-cheeked young lieutenant.

"Do you know where Turgai Street is?" he asked Pavel.

Pavel thought quickly. What could this youth want with a street in Arkhangelsk? The way he stared at the street-cars and gaped at the loudspeakers on the corners that were blaring "Meadowland," it must be his first visit. Still, there should be more money here. "Yes. I can take you there."

"Just tell me the way."

"You would find it hard to go there. And you will find no other guides who speak good English."

The Britisher looked keenly at Pavel. *He's cautious,* Pavel thought. *Not as naïve as I first judged him. Even the pigeon learns to watch for hunters.*

Pavel said: "I am honest. I do not talk to any officials about my business."

The other grinned. He had an honest smile, wide and spreading all over his face. "All right, Russki. Will you meet me here in an hour?"

"Yes. My name is Pavel."

"Righto, Pavel. Call me Arthur." He took his bag and went into the hotel.

Pavel dragged his sledge into the back of Medvedovsky's optical shop, where he could store it all day if he wished for two American cigarettes, and then hurried to his own apartment with the box from the train under his arm.

Comrade!

AN UNUSUAL STORY OF ADVENTURE IN POST-WAR MURMANSK.

by WILLIAM L. ROHDE

If Ivan Krotkikh ever visited Pavel's lodgings, he most certainly would blow his official top. Outwardly just another large room in one of the regular long, two-story wooden buildings that comprise Arkhangelsk's wartime housing developments, inside one found more comforts than Krotkikh himself enjoyed.

The furnishings were maple and green-leatherette chairs, a settee, and a bunk from an American ship. Along one wall Pavel had built bookshelves, and opposite them stood a large radio and record-player with an ample supply of disks. The area screened off for a kitchenette boasted a refrigerator, a double-hot-plate, and—most important of all—shelves filled with all kinds of Russian, American and British foods in tins and jars.

Pavel sighed with satisfaction when he bolted the door behind him. He always felt pleased to survey his quarters—the first comfortable haven he had known since he began the long trek from Rostov to Berlin. He had not deserted. He fought through the war with courage and received a few ribbons—but when sent to Arkhangelsk to recover from his wounds, he stayed there. No one had bothered to find him, and he found the free-wheeling life of barter, peppered with a little smuggling and an occasional gray-market deal, quite to his liking.

He put water on the hot-plate for tea, stripped off his tattered coat and blouse, washed, and then opened the box. He stacked six cartons of American cigarettes on the table, four pounds of coffee, and two boxes of chocolate bars. He estimated rapidly; "I paid Rumyantsev two hundred rubles and five packs of cigarettes to bring up the shipment. The vodka in payment to the American on the ship cost me six hundred rubles. I'll sell this stuff for about twenty-four hundred rubles. A nice profit."

He breakfasted on tea, black bread, butter, cheese and English marmalade. Sitting in his black blouse, well-cut trousers, and soft felt boots, he looked like a successful party member rather than a man who dragged a sledge to meet the trains. His stained, padded coat and ragged fur hat served as a disguise. Pavel was not vain.

THE British lieutenant who called himself Arthur was waiting inside the doors of the Intourist. Pavel nodded and said: "Come on."

Illustrated by Sigismund Vidbergs

Arthur plodded behind him in silence, his sea-boots crunching on the hard snow. Pavel thought: *It must be a girl. He met her at Odessa or Moscow or Murmansk, and now he has come to her here. This should be profitable. Love has loose purse-strings.*

The two men walked for more than a mile; then Pavel turned to the right, past a streetcar track on which a section gang of buxom women were working with wooden shovels. Turgai Street was another development in a new section, more of the barracks-like wooden apartment buildings. It was a short street, and Pavel stopped in the middle.

"What apartment?" he asked.

Arthur stared around helplessly. "I don't know—"

"What's her name?"

The Englishman's eyes widened at that. He looked cautiously at Pavel for a moment, then said slowly: "Masha Gubinov. Or really, Mrs. Packer. My wife."

Pavel nodded. "Wait."

He went into the first doorway and knocked on a downstairs apartment. An old woman answered, engulfing him with a blast of warm air from the room. It smelled strongly of cabbage. Yes, Masha Gubinov lived three doors down—upstairs. Pavel gave her one cigarette and led Arthur past the wooden outhouses in front of the apartment buildings to the third entrance. He went up the scarred plank stairs and knocked.

The girl was pretty, with rich brown hair and clear pink skin.

Pavel said in Russian: "Here is a friend of yours." He stepped aside and let Arthur up the stairs.

Masha said, "My darling!" in bad English; Arthur said, "Sugar!" in very poor Russian, and took her in his arms with the sweep of a wrestler enveloping an opponent. But of course they didn't wrestle. Pavel looked away, and then as time passed and he tired of looking down the dark stairway, he looked at them. They were certainly in love. He felt the deep sadness again as his mind disobeyed him and leaped back to Luda —Luda, his wife. He had seen her grave after the war. . . .

Masha regained her senses first. "Come in," she said, and stumbled backward. Arthur followed awkwardly, and then she started to cry. It lasted for a moment, and then the two both started to talk at once. Pavel decided he had never heard languages so brutally used. But they understood each other well enough. When he could stand it no longer, he closed the door with a thud. Arthur turned to look at him in sudden remembrance, then fumbled under his long blue coat.

"Many thanks," the Englishman said. "Many thanks. Many thanks." He held out several pound-notes.

Pavel said: "Keep those. I'd rather have some foods or bottles when we go back to your ship."

"We?"

"Yes, I'll go to Molotovsk with you for them."

Arthur looked uncomfortable. "I'm not sure when I'm going back. You'd better take the money."

"You're on the *Port Fairley?*"

"Yes."

"Then you're going back this evening. She sails in the morning."

A cloud gathered on the other man's brow. The young jaw hardened. Pavel said: "Don't be angry. I have friends on the ice-breakers. I know when ships move."

"Very well. But you'd better take these pounds and push off."

"You will need me. You can never get her on the ship without help."

Masha had lighted the samovar and returned to lean against her husband's side, clutching his arm as though afraid he might suddenly vanish. She exclaimed: "Arthur! You came for me? I go with you?"

The Englishman was still watching Pavel. "That was my plan," he said.

Pavel leaned against the wall. "I might help you. I guarantee nothing, but without me you have no chance."

"Why would you help us?"

They would not understand if he talked of excitement that soothed the heart—of the joy it gave him to tip over the sleigh of authority. He said: "The girl must have rubles. They will be worth nothing to you in England."

"Yes," Masha breathed. "I have a few thousand."

Arthur asked: "Can you trust him, dear?"

Masha spoke rapidly in Russian. "You will help us? Do not betray us, or I swear I will find you and kill you myself. You have an honest face, but a wolf can look like a loyal dog."

Pavel shrugged. "I was a soldier. I am a man. I want your rubles. It does no one harm that you go with your husband. And I like to fool the smug officials."

She looked up at her husband. "Trust him."

Arthur rebelled at first when Pavel brought him a tattered fur hat and a leather coat with the horsehide ripped open in many places, but at last he agreed to shed his bridge-coat and uniform cap. "You can buy clothes," Pavel explained patiently, "but not lost freedom." They had a high tea, expending Masha's store of cheese and fruit compote, and left the apartment when the Arctic day began to drown itself in its own drab sky.

The train to Molotovsk was jammed, and they made the trip standing in a mass of pressed humanity. One oldster asked Pavel: "Who's the American?"

"Shut your mouth," Pavel answered, and gave the man three cigarettes.

It was dark when they stumbled from the car at Molotovsk, and Pavel drew his charges into a huddle near the low wooden station. Official cars and jeeps were bustling about, and he wanted the activity to dissipate before they made the long walk down the road to the docks.

He felt a heavy hand on his shoulder. "So, hauler of baggage, you are visiting Molotovsk." Pavel turned and looked into the hard, suspicious features of Ivan Krotkikh!

Pavel's stomach tightened up and then relaxed as he forced himself to breathe. He felt exactly as he had on one May morning when he walked across a field near his battery and suddenly found himself bracketed in the crashing thunder of enemy artillery shells. Then, he had dived into a hole and shivered out the barrage. Here there was no hole.

He said in Russian: "The fool can travel as well as the wise man."

"Thank you," Krotkikh answered sardonically. "And where did the fool find the girl and the Englishman?"

Pavel swallowed. Krotkikh had sharp eyes. One does not get the red card in its plastic case by being asleep. He should have remembered that. He had underestimated the man.

"The Englishman got drunk and his clothes were stolen. He promised me a pound of coffee to take him back to his ship."

Krotkikh snapped at Masha. "Your name?"

She said smoothly: "Masha Gubinov."

"Let me see your papers."

Pavel held his breath. Krotkikh nodded sourly and gave her back the booklet. Pavel began to live again, although a damp mist had formed on his upper lip. If the girl had had her papers changed when she married the Englishman in Odessa or wherever it was, Krotkikh would have understood the situation in an instant.

Krotkikh said to Masha: "What's the matter with you? Don't sell yourself to these foreign pigs with empty faces. Go home now, and watch what path you choose in the future."

Masha answered carelessly: "He has promised me a box of chocolate. Please let me go to the dock. There is no train for Arkhangelsk until midnight, anyway."

"No. Go home."

Pavel was glad that Arthur could not follow the rapid exchange, but he had to slip his hand under the man's arm and grip it as Masha used

"Your papers," Krotikh demanded. "Show your papers."

her best weapon. She took a step to Krotkikh, looking up into his stern, alert face. Her soft cheeks, pink and shining with cold under the station lights, almost touched his chin, and her large brown eyes looked pleadingly into the black ones.

"Please—please let me get the chocolate. You can help me eat it. Did you notice my address? Turgai Street. Fourth door."

Ivan looked down at her. She had a figure to be admired even through heavy clothing in a land of well-padded women.

Ivan smiled—a grin carved in stone.

"Go and get your gift, pretty one. I will see you soon in Arkhangelsk." He turned and strode away, the two-toned boots flashing bravely beneath his long coat. Pavel spat quietly in the snow. . . .

The *Port Fairley* was still working cargo in a forward hold, the Russian stevedores looking like fat, overstuffed dolls in their heavy clothes as they moved stiffly about the dock under the cranes. Pavel waited until the Red Army guard at the gangway was alone, then led his charges rapidly across the open space between a warehouse and the ship.

"Hello, Victor," Pavel said quickly, "we'll be on and off in a flash. Who's the officer?"

The sentry, a brisk young man with bayoneted rifle slung on his back, answered rapidly, "Meleff. Look out for him. Hurry."

"Don't worry," Pavel assured him. He passed two packs of cigarettes and a candy bar into Victor's ready hand and leaped up the gangway behind Masha and Arthur. A minute later they were safe behind the door of the young officer's cabin.

"Neatly done," Arthur said, helping Masha remove her coat, its pockets bulging with the few possessions the girl had brought on her flight. She sat on the bunk and handed Pavel a packet of rubles tied with string. He noted that the outside note was a thirty-ruble bill, with Lenin looking soberly at the world from the red background.

"Thanks," he said. "If you have any trouble in England, say you're a political refugee as well as Arthur's wife."

"We'll have no difficulty," Arthur said. "I've looked into it. The chief officer on the ship is my uncle. He will help."

"Good," Pavel said. He put his hand on the door. "Farewell. Be happy."

"Thanks," Arthur answered. "You be careful."

"Many thanks," Masha echoed. "God bless you, Pavel."

He went out, feeling a gentle glow from their happiness, and then a twinge of self-pity which he sternly dismissed. Victor was still alone on the dock, so he crossed the rail and hurried down the gangway.

"The other two will not be coming ashore for some time," he told the sentry. "I'll arrange it with your relief."

"All right. He will be Strunsky. You know him?"

"Sure. Don't worry."

"I know nothing."

Pavel stopped in the shelter of the warehouse, looking at the lights of the ship, listening to the intermittent whine of the winches and the deep "shuf-shuf" of her pumps. *Good-by—*

good-by. The world is dreary enough —who are the fools who would start more tears by keeping lovers apart?

He started to walk along in the shadow of the warehouse toward the road, then stopped, motionless, as a man in a blue uniform appeared on the dock and accosted Victor. Pavel saw his features in the yellow glare of the cargo lights. Ivan Krotkikh! The wolf was sniffing at the trail!

The two men talked briefly. Victor shook his head in a negative gesture, and the official turned and strode up the gangway onto the ship.

The instant that Ivan disappeared through the main deck hatch, Pavel bounded across the dock to Victor. "What did he want? What did you say?"

The guard answered nervously: "He asked who went aboard tonight. I told him just some sailors. It will be bad if he finds the others. Who are they?"

"Just friends of mine having a good meal. They are well hidden."

Pavel stood looking at the ship. Ivan Krotkikh was no fool. He felt a short-lived admiration for the man's astuteness. He was a bulldog. You'd have to ride a fast horse to elude that single-purposed comrade. Clever, too. He had let them go to the dock and followed them—an easier way of finding out what they were up to than asking questions and listening to lies.

"You'd better go away," Victor warned.

"Da . . . da," Pavel replied absently.

Yes, he ought to flee. Ivan would soon piece together the game when he found the players; you'd never checkmate that Krotkikh with a bishop and a knight. *And they looked so happy together. She resembled Luda. She deserved happiness.*

Actually Masha was no more an image of Luda than a pigeon looks like a swan, but time and sentiment blended both girls into one mold in Pavel's imagination.

He said, "Don't worry, Victor," and went up the gangway.

The British seaman on watch recognized Pavel and grinned at him: "Back again, Russki? When will you have her loaded?"

The sailor expected no answer, and his young face flushed when Pavel answered in his rather Oxfordian accent: "You'll be away before the ice closes in, my lad. Tell me, please, if the last Russian gentleman to come aboard asked about my party."

"Yes sir. He did. I told him that three of you came on, and one left."

Pavel said, "Thanks very much," and slowly walked along the inside companionway and up the ladder to the boat deck. When he could look along the passage toward Arthur Packer's cabin, he paused and watched the man standing in the deserted corridor outside the British officer's door. Long blue coat—colorful boots of brown and white—Ivan Krotkikh was listening before he pounced.

The ship was quiet, except for the rumble of distant winches and generators and pumps that are the standby music of every vessel in port. Most of the officers and crew were still ashore, and Pavel had a moment for thought. *I ought to get out of here. Perhaps I can still talk my way through the mess—or I can catch the train south from Arkhangelsk.*

A picture of his comfortable apartment prodded him, urged him to go. Then another scene crossed in front of it—Ivan Krotkikh, opening Arthur

Pavel said: "Here is a friend of yours."

Packer's door after a discreet knock. Masha's scream. Arthur's attempt to resist, and the arrival of the immigration inspectors and a squad of Red Army men. Masha dragged ashore and Arthur restricted to the ship.

Pavel Sulukhia was a Mingrelian, a man of mercurial temperament. It is said of the Mingrelians that they are like a loaded gun with a broken safety catch: you never can tell when and how such a gun might go off. Pavel still carried an unlighted cigarette in his left hand, and when he opened his fist, bits of torn paper and shredded tobacco fluttered down to the deck. He looked down for a moment and thought: *Foolish one—that was worth a ruble.*

His felt boots made no sound as he walked up behind Ivan Krotkikh and said: "One moment, comrade."

The official did not jump. He turned, looked at Pavel with nerveless calm, and said: "So, baggageman, you have returned."

"Yes." Pavel looked at the cold black eyes, the hard, uncompromising mouth. There was little sentiment left in this man. He said: "I will give you thirty thousand rubles to forget the girl. No one will be harmed if you let her go. The Englishman is her husband."

Ivan snapped: "You're under arrest. Stay with me." He reached for the knob on the door.

Pavel did an unreasonable thing. He was never sorry, later, although he never could explain to himself just why he did it. Perhaps the broken safety catch slipped. He struck Ivan with a short left jab, and when the man reeled into the center of the passage Pavel looped a long, brutal right to the side of his head. Ivan went down, cursing and clawing at the flap of his holster.

Pavel kicked the hand away from the gun, jumped on top of the official, and an instant later the heavy blue pistol clattered away down the passage. Several hard punches thudded against his thick coat and he laughed. You couldn't win a fight that way when you both were padded with clothes. He bounced to his feet like a fat puppet on an elastic line. Ivan scrambled up and advanced grimly, his arms hooked to hit or grab.

Pavel retreated when Ivan rushed. He sidestepped, pulled the other forward, and tripped him. Ivan went down for the second time, with Pavel on his back. He hooked an arm around Krotkikh's neck, caught a fold of his own coat for leverage, and hung on.

It is said that with such a hold a Mingrelian can strangle a wolf or break its back. Ivan writhed across the steel deckplates as the punishing arm squeezed his throat through coat and collar. Pavel crashed against a bulkhead. His ears rang as Ivan turned completely over, banging Pavel's skull. But he hung on.

Pavel did an unreasonable thing. He struck—a short jab, a long right—and Ivan went down, cursing.

After awhile he closed his eyes, ordering his muscles to harden. He squeezed, wrenching his arm tighter under Ivan's chin. If he twisted to the side he could have broken the other's neck, but that would be too much.

"Stop. You'll kill him."

Pavel looked up at Arthur Packer. Ivan was a dead weight beside him, the two men lying against the bulkhead like two carpets rolled together.

He relaxed his grip a little. "He won't die. He's a Uzbek."

Slowly he released his opponent and stood up. Ivan's face was beet-red, the eyes closed and mouth open as he struggled for breath.

"Now we're for it," Arthur Packer said worriedly. "The fat is in the fire."

"No," Pavel said flatly. "Get plenty of rope and some cloth for a gag. Have you a place to hide him?"

"Yes. . . . But what good—"

"Sail tomorrow as you planned. Give this bear some water once or twice, then let him loose in a couple of days. He'll raise the roof, as the Yankees say, but what can he do? Your authorities will ship him back, and Masha stays in England as a political refugee."

Arthur nodded. "The official pursued the fair young lady and was trapped. It makes Masha's story even better." Suddenly he looked at Pavel. "But then, when he gets back? You—"

"Yes," Pavel echoed. "When he gets back. Me."

When Pavel descended to the dock an hour later, with a soft kiss from Masha still warm on his lips, and a sack of whisky and cigarettes on his back as a parting gift from Arthur, he found that Victor had been relieved by Strunsky. He said, "Hello, Josef," and gave the sentry two packets of Players.

"Thanks." Strunsky whisked the cigarettes out of sight. "Victor said you were on board with some friends."

"No. I'm the last one. My friends are all safely away."

Strunsky shrugged. "Good. I won't have to worry about passes. How many drinks did you give Victor?"

Pavel grinned. "Enough. And here's yours." With mild regret he took a bottle of Scotch from his sack and watched it disappear without a trace inside the guard's green coat.

He turned and walked through the cold night toward the station. The cold! He'd had enough of it, anyway. The sun shone warm and bright in the Crimea. Mentally he estimated his stock and how much it would bring in a rapid closeout. And his furniture—he'd leave the North with a heavy pocket. And Masha's apartment—there was a sewing-machine and other things there that would end better as rubles in his pocket than as booty for the first official who came to investigate the vacancy.

He walked faster, his boots crunching solidly in the hard snow. Pavel Sulukhia must disappear, but Russia's breast is broad and deep. There would always be a place for a man of enterprise.

A covered wagon that lagged behind the train on the old Oregon trail when the Indians were on the warpath, needed a lot of luck to get through.

The Road

THE wheel was fixed, and none too soon. Lot Trask saw that his wife had walked ahead and was shading her eyes against the glaring distance where the ruts of Applegate's Cut-off vanished. She was wondering about Jim. But Lot was not in a mind to wait, he thought, tossing his drawing-knife into the chest. A dished wheel had put them a day behind the emigrant train.

For himself, he would as soon finish the crossing apart from the big and noisy company, but a wagon needed protection on this trail. It was Indian country, on the stretch from Mary's River to the California mountains, waterless, grassless, empty and lonely as the moon itself.

Rowena came back, to vanish on the shaded side of the wagon, where she had been playing some game with the children. Lot knew she was eager to catch up with the other wagons. Loneliness settled on her sooner than with most. Her brother Jim was off with his gun; and since Lot Trask had been born with a button on his lip, she had only the young ones for company.

He knocked the props from under the axletree and lifted the tool-chest into the wagon with an easy swing. The movement brought Rowena on, dark and tall and smooth-walking. Her slim body gave no hint of motherhood of a boy and girl of school age, an age that worried her, for they'd not likely find a school where they would settle, on the Oregon frontier.

"When I fetch the cattle, we'll go," Lot said, trying to cheer her.

Her eyes gave him trouble when she looked at him. "Hadn't we better wait for Jim?" Jim Quayle was her twin.

"We'll likely meet him ahead. Or he can catch us. Hope he raised meat. We could sure use it, and water and grass. And we could use the other wagons too, I reckon." He grinned at her. "We'll need to hump to catch 'em. Stir Tom and Molly, and get into the seat. I'll yoke up." It nearly ran him out of breath to talk so much.

Rowena shook her head, still detached. "Riding's too hot, and it's too rough. We'll walk on."

"Better not," Lot said. He could see for miles across the baking alkali, but there was an obscuring rise ahead. Rowena disappeared around the wagon, and he knew she didn't like to move on before Jim came back. Womb-mates, they were as one person split into man and woman, but not apart.

Lot went out to the cattle pickets. The four draft steers were underwatered and worse fed. Their gauntness raked him, but water was ahead on the Black Rock stretch. He'd done risky things to take his oxen apart from the train's big herd and let them browse, such as was possible where little grew but scattered sage, and where little lived beyond lizards that took flight and fled from under each rock. The "little besides" was what concerned all who made this crossing: the embittered Digger Indians some folly had settled in this area, who showed the savagery of their nature in their poisoned arrows. Let them get in close among the rocks—Lot shook the thought from his mind.

He saw that Rowena had hustled the children, and they were picking up the few things left out from last night's camp. Once or twice she flung a look far out, in concern for Jim, and this nettled Lot. He wondered about twins, and if the manner of their birth made it so they could never live apart and unto themselves. It seemed true of this pair. Yet she gave him all a man could ask, and had never shown a moment's crossness. He was satisfied.

Lot's world turned about his wife and children. About them revolved the many things needed to care for them properly. If a man did it right, and Lot Trask wasn't built to do anything he tackled otherwise, it left

to Jericho

by GIFFORD CHESHIRE

him little time for talk and dallying. . . . But he wasn't given to brooding, and he put this also from his mind, and took in the sore-footed animals.

Nearing the wagon he heard a whoop, and young Tom's voice rang out. "Yonder comes Uncle Jim! Over the hill!"

Lot turned. Jim's horse had topped the rise and was coming along the trail ahead. Nothing crossed his saddle to indicate that he had shot any meat.

The oxen were under yoke by the time Jim rode in. He went past Lot with a nod and grin; then his eyes found Rowena, and he smiled. He winked at Tom and more elaborately at Molly, which made the little girl giggle. The horse showed sweat, Lot noted, and had been ridden hard. Jim looked easy, but there was something subtilely wrong in his face.

Jim swung down, a solid weight on the sand, and walked to the water-barrel strapped to the wagon. He filled the dipper and drank with distaste, for the water was warm and brackish. His faded shirt stuck darkly to a sweating, hard-muscled back. His long, lean face built sharp-pulled lines about his eyes.

Rowena came over, and was like a morning-glory opening to the sun. "If you're hungry, Jim, I can get to the grub-box easy." The cheer was there, that easily restored by Jim.

"Never mind," Jim said, a little sharp. Then he grinned. "Too hot to be hungry. Rode miles and seen desert, but not a blamed thing to shoot at."

"You look too hot, or tired, or too something."

"Too hot. And I ain't been anything else since we crossed the Missouri." Jim unsnapped the bucket hanging under the wagon, dipped a splash of the precious water into it and let the horse draw it up. Some place yonder Jim had ridden the horse too hard for the heat, though Jim was as fussy about livestock as Lot.

"Jim, something's wrong." Rowena looked relentlessly at her brother's face.

"Not if that clung-tongued scarecrow you married's got the wheel fixed. Unless you mean there's nothing right about this plagued country he dragged us into." For once the grin that always came with Jim's chiding was a little thin.

Lot had nothing to return. He never did. He never even bothered to return Jim's half-hearted grin, for dourness was part of his nature. He couldn't climb the barrier of his lifeless tongue, so all he could do was get at things. He did now, finishing his chore and picking up the ox-goad.

"We best get going," he said, and clucked to the cattle.

"Indians," Rowena said, persisting at Jim.

"Girl," Jim said, "there's thousands in these parts, and no doubt of it. But I ain't seen so much as a moccasin track. You and the kids pad on ahead of the dust, while I let Lot talk my leg off."

She was uncertain, but she turned away, gathering the children and moving forward out of the pall of alkali that marked each wagon's progress across the desert. Jim led his horse, his boots hitting hard on the sand beside Lot. He lowered his voice.

"Lot, I stumbled onto a sickenin' mess, a long ways west of here. She was right. It was Digger work, with all the fancy touches to tie a knot in a man's stomach."

Lot never missed a stride, but his eyes narrowed for an instant. "The wagon train?"

"No. You mind that horseback party that rode past yesterday, headin' for the California mines? That's as far as they got. Four of 'em dead, but one's still alive. Some scab-rock along there. Diggers hid 'em in it,

with the packs they stole, so the train wouldn't notice when it come past. Then they took the horses and cleared out, I reckon. I hope so."

The oxen were laboring up the rise, their straining necks already showing sweat. Lot nearly called Rowena back before they disappeared beyond, the space ahead dark and baneful now, even in the late afternoon sun. He desisted, not wanting her distressed or worried, knowing she'd been no happier this side of the big river than Jim.

"How'd you stumble onto it?" he asked.

"The man that's alive crawled back to the trail. Arrow through his belly. Hardly more than a kid."

"He conscious?"

Jim shook his head. "And he may be dead by the time we get there. Lord, I hope that, too."

NIGHT came on before they reached the place, a starlight filled with vague things too shapeless not to worry over. Lot was drawn tight, and he had his rifle across his shoulder. It was the first scab-rock to run close, a likely place for an ambush; yet it would be folly to try to pull in a blind circle around it. He had made his family crawl into the wagon long since, and hoped they'd fallen asleep in spite of the wagon's continual jar.

"Say when, Jim," Lot said.

"Just a piece ahead." Then, after long moments: "Here. Over there. Looks like a log. Reckon he's finished." Jim's voice indicated relief.

They walked over, Lot with his long legs nearly past control. The shape lay on the sand, forlorn, unmoving. Lot dropped to his knees, his battered plainsman hat shoved back. The figure was face down, and the feathered arrow shaft angled from its side at the back. Lot knew even as he grasped the wrist that there was a faint pulse in it.

His face must have shown something, for Jim groaned. "He's still alive. It must have happened around noon yesterday. He's got a poison arrow in him. He's bled. He's laid all that time in the sun. And he's still alive."

Lot was thinking swiftly, feeling the aura of this place and all that lay about them. The man wasn't scalped, but only because the Diggers had been rushed to get away before the big wagon train came along. Maybe this one arrow hadn't been poisoned as heavily as they figured, or the man's clothes had rubbed enough off. The fellow did look young, and maybe nothing vital was hit inside.

"See if you can fetch the medicine kit without wakening Rowena," Lot said, turned brusque.

"What'll we do with him, Lot? The wagon'd kill him if we take him along. We can't stay here. He's as good as done for, but we can't bury him alive. Or—or leave him like this."

"We'll do what we can," Lot said.

"Lot, it's two to one we've been spotted, one wagon a long ways behind the train."

"Fetch the kit," Lot answered.

He rolled the man farther onto his side. He cut the arrow shaft and pulled it out. He was praying that the man would die from this rough mercy. But as long as a bit of life remained, they had to cherish it. He was a deft man who had to talk with his hands, and over the years this had given him experience in crude medicine and surgery.

Rowena came out of the wagon, the first sign she had been awakened. She looked at the hurt man, then squatted across from Lot and for a long while was silent. Jim brought the lantern, and presently, at a word from Lot, unyoked the oxen to let them rest. The star-flung sky hung above them in impersonal tranquillity.

Then Jim said to his sister: "You might as well know the whole of it. There's dead men yonder against the rocks. I'm going in to see if the Diggers left any water."

Quickly Lot said: "First, rustle a fire. You can heat water, Rowena, and scare up cloth. We'll try and make him comfortable, whether he knows the difference or not."

Jim was gone a long while, and returned bearing dead sage and chemiso clumps. He vanished again, and Lot knew he had gone into the outcrop, anxious not only to scare up a few canteens of water, but to make certain nothing else lurked in there. Rowena crossed to the fire and busied herself. Again and again Lot picked up the young miner's wrist, to drop it in drawn impatience.

With Rowena's help they bound the wounds, after washing them with soap and hot water. It needed effort to take these restorative measures, to do anything that might strengthen that pulse in the slightest, and bind them here the longer. Yet Lot went through the steps, patient and careful, and outwardly it was without pause. With slow movements he got their brandy from the kit. He lifted the boy's head, poured and saw a reflex swallow. He waited, then, for it was out of his hands.

Jim came back and said: "Well, no water. Which means the Diggers are supplied, and could be hanging close even yet."

Lot looked up at him. "We only got your horse. Nothing to draw 'em. This can't last long. Then, if we crowd it, we might catch the wagon train at their next camp."

"Might," Jim said, and walked off. He got his horse and rode out. Lot didn't try to stop him, knowing Jim would ride a circle about them, scouting, and with the desert traveler's hope of finding unexpected water.

Lot searched the miner for identification. He found nothing revealing, though there was a worn picture of a girl. She didn't look like him, and was likely his wife or sweetheart. Lot didn't show it to Rowena, but put it back to be buried with the boy when they reached that point. He grew aware that dawn was washing the stars from the untroubled sky.

He said to Rowena, "Best make our breakfast," and watched her stir from a slump by the fire. In that moment he saw her strangeness in this stark place, and thought: *I dragged her out here. Now I've pinned her down in this.* He wanted to say something, but there were no words. He got busy, bringing what they needed from the wagon. Then it was that he saw their patient lift a hand ever so slightly and let it drop.

Lot walked to him, and again he forced brandy down the swollen throat. Rowena, at the campfire, hadn't observed it. He thought how odd it was that they waited for death to release them, and that death would not come. Then he thought of the life that had kept up its flicker through the long hours before they reached here, and this steadied him.

Presently Rowena whirled, and her voice was released despair. "Why doesn't Jim come back? What's keeping him?"

"Now, Rowena," Lot said, his voice held quiet, "Jim's always showed inclination to stray off and poke around. Could be he's seen sign of water, or has raised game. He's armed, and we've heard no shooting."

"Or he got into trouble before he knew it."

"Best get on with breakfast. He'll be back and—it'll be over, and then we can go."

HE had a corroding despair of his own, its weight increased by a mounting guilt. He had known without ever facing it how much she and Jim had hated to tear up roots, to leave the known and secure for this ineffable and unending jeopardy, to give up friends and family for this isolation, whose only apparent reward was increased hardship. He had pressed it, because he was a man suited to such things; and without complaint, they had come.

He thought: *Soon as Jim comes, we best put the boy in the wagon and go. The sooner he dies, the more mercy to him.* . . . In the next breath he knew that they couldn't, and ever again escape wonder as to how it might have been.

He didn't want to move the boy at all if he could help; so, as the sun rose to throw its bright, beginning heat

Illustrated by Benton Clark

"I stumbled onto a sickenin' mess. It was Digger work, with all the fancy touches to tie a knot in a man's stomach."

upon them, he yoked the oxen patiently and moved the wagon between. It roused the children, who descended from the wagon to have their morning boisterousness doused instantly by what they discerned.

"Who is he?" Tommy asked, and Molly merely stared with frowning, pained eyes.

"A boy who aimed to strike it rich in California," Lot answered, "then go home and marry his sweetheart."

"Was it Injuns? Will they jump us?"

"It was, and they won't," Lot said.

Rowena gave the children their sparse, simple breakfast, and Lot drank coffee. Afterward he rationed a few swallows each for the oxen from the dwindling water in the barrel. Again he knew a moment of distress that he could give them nothing to eat beyond the desert's scant browse.

His wife walked over to him and said in a lowered voice: "Lot, something's happened to Jim."

"We'll wait a bit before we worry."

"Wait, wait. Travel, travel. And never worry." She went back, her shoulders held stiffly.

Lot judged it was eight o'clock when he made up his mind. Jim had been gone eight or ten hours, which was unaccountable. He went to Rowena.

"Reckon you'll have to tend the young 'uns. And the miner. I'll poke out a bit and see what I can see."

She pulled straight, wanting him to go, yet caught by something. "How can you go after him without a horse?"

"I'll pick up his tracks and mosey out a piece, and maybe it'll give us some inkling." He caught up his rifle, which he had kept against a wagon wheel.

Nothing crossed Jim's saddle to indicate that he had shot any meat.

Rowena dropped her gaze, and her hands clenched at her sides. "Lot, I can't stay alone in this place with those men in there in the rocks, and the other—"

"Diggers're the only danger, and here's the pistol," Lot said. "You'll be all right."

In a moment she said: "Yes, I can do it, Lot. Go on."

He put a little water into a canteen, then slung on powder-horn and bullet-pouch. He made a light motion of farewell, not wanting to disturb her farther, and started out. He walked straight toward the scab-rock, dreading it, but he had gained an idea of what Jim might have done. He entered the rock with a puckered feeling the length of his spine.

It was all that Jim had described, worse when a man laid eyes on it. Lot kept his gaze off the men, running it briefly over the rifled, scattered horse packs. Then he went on, and came out behind the outcrop.

It was not hard to discover the tracks of what must have been a dozen horses, the Indian ponies and those of the miners. They cut a straight and hurried line out from the ambush, and Lot had gone only a short distance when he discovered another set. These were to the right of the flight, those of a slow-moving horse whose rider was following carefully through the moonlight.

Lot had no idea why Jim had done this thing, but knew that he had. Pausing a moment, Lot squinted his eyes against the sun-glared distance that nothing broke but the far dip of an empty sky. In that moment he had his own rebellion. He had worked through a day on the wagon wheel, driven through half the night, and spent the rest tending the hurt boy. It was day again, more hot and hopeless than he had ever dreamed a day could be. He shook his shoulders roughly and went on.

It was three hours before the desert ahead showed any change. Then Lot wasn't sure what he saw. It took a long while to decide that it was dust lifting from a pin-point on the flat desert floor. There was no making out what caused it, at best, and now his punished eyes had taken to jumping in and out of focus. It encouraged and worried him together, and he managed to hurry a little.

The speck disappeared, and he knew it hadn't been anything. He went on, his gait a little lurching, with anxiety beginning to crowd into his mind. He still followed the plain trail of fast-driven horses, and here and there he picked up special tracks he was certain were those of Jim's mount. Yet why the man had ridden this way, and so far, was a complete mystery, and Lot began to fear he lacked the strength to keep going until he had found Jim —or to get back to the wagon.

Then at last he distinguished the horse with the empty saddle, in the far distance, and he knew presently that it was Jim's horse. It was plodding toward Lot in a tired and patient gait. Lot hurried to meet it.

The animal showed sweat marks, more than this slow shuffle across the sands would raise. Lot caught the horse and swung into the saddle, having trouble balancing himself until he got settled. He swung it about and started back along its route, the rifle balanced across the saddle before him. Something had lifted dust, and not very far back, this horse had traveled fast.

He found Jim lying face-down on the scuffed trail. Something knotted up in Lot as he lowered himself drunkenly from the saddle. There wasn't a mark on Jim, and yet he lay unconscious. Lot turned him onto his side, staring down, then bent in alarm above him. Jim was breathing with a snoring breath, and again and again his whole body moved convulsively. His skin was dry, intensely hot, and when Lot pried up an eyelid, he found the pupil contracted.

He knew what it was, having seen it in the train after they entered the desert. Sunstroke. It was deadly unless immediately relieved by shade and cold baths and lots of drinking-water. Lot's knees nearly buckled, and for a moment the dizziness ran through himself. He bent and got Jim up across the saddle. He lashed him there, took the reins and started.

The sun was hard and hot on his back when he saw the scab-rock he had so long been watching for. He skirted the rocks, staggering ahead of the led horse, not wanting to encounter their grisly enclosure. He came upon the emigrant trail, and a moment later saw young Tom bounding out from the wagon toward him.

Lot managed to steady himself, never having liked to show weakness before the young ones. "Boy, don't run thataway in the heat," he called as Tom panted toward him; then, as the boy came up, he added: "How's your mother?"

"All right," Tom gasped. "The miner, he died. What's wrong with Uncle Jim?"

Lot swayed a moment. All this, and it had done no good whatsoever! It had been a hard trial, a useless one, and now Jim was in mortal peril. He didn't answer Tom, but hurried himself, and saw Rowena running toward them as they drew near the wagon.

"Heat got him, coming back," Lot managed to tell her. "Fell off his horse. Poked way off down country, and I reckon it was to make sure the Diggers'd cleared out. Get water, girl, while I put him in the shade and get the clothes off him. We'll do what we can—"

"Jim! Jim!"

Lot got Jim Quayle off his horse and stretched on the quilt Rowena hastily

threw down on the shaded side of the big wagon. He fell to work at once pulling Jim's clothes off, calling: "Fetch water, Rowena—a pailful."

"Lot – Lot – there's scarcely that much left!"

"Fetch it."

"But Lot, what'll we do then? The children—you—"

"Bring water."

He kept soaking cloths until he had Jim covered with them. He tried again and again to get him to drink, but Jim had slipped too far into unconsciousness. He tried brandy, but it only ran out the edge of Jim's mouth, and by now his body was alarmingly hot to the touch. The thirsty cloths kept sopping their scant water.

"If you can stand to stay alone again," Lot said, "and keep tending him, I'll light out for the next springs. Supposed to be a couple days' travel from our last camp, and we've come half that. Another fifteen miles, maybe—a day's travel with the wagon. If his horse can stand it, I could cut it in half that, and be back this time tomorrow with what I can fetch."

Rowena straightened on the other side of Jim's inert figure. Her face was blank, and her mouth hung open. "Lot, you couldn't stand it. You've already had too much."

"Takes water, and we need more for ourselves to get the wagon on." Lot managed to get to his feet and hold there without swaying. He knew Jim's horse was played out, that there was scarcely a chance he could ride it through and back with the extra burden of what water he could bring in containers. Yet he turned toward the horse.

Rowena caught his arm. "Lot, I won't let you. It'd finish you."

"We'll need more for Jim. He's your brother."

"And you're my husband. No, Lot. We'll do what we can for him. And then wait."

There was authority in her voice, and something Lot had never dreamed could be there, a concern for him as great or greater than her fear for Jim. He looked at her in pure wonder.

"But Jim—"

"Lot, I learned something in the hours you were gone. That miner roused a little at the end. Enough to clasp my hand. I know it eased him through, and how I know that, I *don't* know. I was horribly ashamed of myself, for all last night I hated him for holding us here. Now you go and rest, and we'll trust."

The afternoon was mercilessly hot, without end; and by sundown their last drop of water was gone. Jim Quayle still lay inertly, but his breathing was steadier, stronger, and Lot thought the fever had dropped. In the coolness of the night he seemed to pick up, and now Lot Trask got his shovel and went into the rock cluster once more. He worked long hours putting away the remains of the miners who had perished here. Then he came back to the wagon with a strange sense of repose in him.

To his surprise, as he came up, Jim's weak voice said: "Don't anything ever stop you, Lot? When I felt myself fallin' off my horse, I expected to open my eyes in the hereafter. Who but Lot Trask'd walk out that far, worryin' about me?"

Lot straightened above him, scowling thunderously. "You plagued idiot, what in thunderation were you after?"

"Trying to make sure we weren't going to get jumped; then I turned sick coming in. Tried to hurry the horse, and that was a mistake. Fell out o' the saddle. Lot, damn your ornery hide—I appreciate it!"

Lot turned away hastily. He had taken only the short rest Rowena had forced upon him the day before, but he felt strong and steady. And warm inside. He wasn't worried. By daylight, likely, Jim could stand to ride in the wagon far as the springs, where they could camp until he was on his feet. After what they had put behind, they surely could get that far without water.

Yet he wanted to say something to Rowena, to tell her how much it meant to find he was as much to her as her twin. He wanted to say how sorry he was he had blinded himself with his own dreams, and forced her and Jim to come to this country. It was too late to turn back. Ahead lay more isolation and hardship, the kind of thing a woman like Rowena wasn't suited to. He wanted to put these things into words, but words had always refused to work for him. So he got busy, checking over the wagon, making sure the repaired wheel was holding up.

Rowena slipped across to him. "Lot, there's nothing that won't keep till you've slept awhile."

"Rowena, I— Plague it, I wish I hadn't brought you into such a lonely country."

She smiled, and her face was easier than it had ever been on the crossing. "Lot Trask, it's good for a person to be to himself once in a while. It gives him a chance to find out things about himself. And about others. It doesn't seem so lonely now I know I've got a husband who talks to me."

"You know I was born with a buttoned lip."

"Maybe. But there's no button on your hands, nor your shoulders. And it took me long enough to learn how to listen."

"It doesn't seem so lonely now that I've got a husband who talks to me."

High

He was talking easily with them, as he had taught himself to do—accepting their congratulations; for even they understood that being champion of the world was an attainment.

"HIGH in the palace lived the King's daughter, the golden girl. . . ." It was running through his mind, which was not sensible, not at all careful, not the way he should think, in there. He stabbed a jab into Tetrazini's bloody face and moved to the champion's left, keeping away from the lethal right of the tough man. It was the tenth round. Five more—five more rounds. The multitude in the big ball-park was yelling.

Tom Mulroy moved with ease. He was a big man, yet he seemed slim under the white lights, fighting the burly champion. He always seemed slim and quick and deft and cool. He sweated, but seemed cool. People who attended prize-fights did not prefer Tom Mulroy's coolness, his careful boxing.

Rack Tetrazini came bulling. He was canny enough, but he was a

in the Palace

THIS IS THE STORY OF A GREAT FIGHT AND A GREAT FIGHTER —BUT THE MOST IMPORTANT EVENTS DIDN'T ALL HAPPEN IN THE RING.

by JOEL REEVE

straight-ahead puncher, conscious of his title, a brave one. He tossed the left like a club, the right always menacing. He snorted, plunging.

On the rapier point of his left Mulroy piled up his lead. Consciousness of his strength, his youth, his careful planning was in him. He moved left, then right—stepping quickly, breaking the punches sharply against Tetrazini's face. He brought blood to the damaged eye.

"High in the white palace the golden girl waited. . . ." It was a dream, an impossible dream. Yet it was true . . . it was true.

He increased the pace. He jabbed, jabbed. For ten rounds now Tetrazini had been accepting straight, hard blows. Then the right; Tom let it ride down the middle through the pawing gloves. Rack was coming in, always coming in. It would be possible to love this courageous wonderful fighting man, this champion. He was decent, he was good, he was a fighter. Admiring him, Tom beat upon him with the left hand.

And then Tetrazini was ducking too slow, coming in to get close and punch. Tom's right went licking out; it connected with the point of the incoming chin.

There was a moment, just one fleeting moment when Tom was standing on the brink. He had planned to go fifteen rounds, planned with care to win from hell-to-breakfast, on points. But the moment came so suddenly that he almost lost it, standing there—just one moment among millions.

Then he was moving. His left hand prodded, his right whipped as it had never whipped before. Tetrazini staggered. The thousands stood upon their seats roaring themselves hoarse, all reason gone, witnessing, for the price of admission, the unbelievable.

Tom Mulroy swung the right hand again, as hard as all his trained muscles would allow him to swing. Tetrazini's face was a frozen, tragic mask. His knees buckled. Tom struck with a left hook, a right cross, a full left swing.

Tetrazini came apart, like a cardboard doll saturated in the rain. His seams parted, his whole being folded in upon itself. He sank, his subconscious mind fighting a battle it would wage through all life to death itself, but his eyes were blank in his rugged face. Tom Mulroy stood in the corner until the referee came to raise his arm. He stood there, drinking it in, the fruits of his years of labor, of denial, of dreaming. He looked at little Ord Bradley, his manager, whose lips were moving in thankful prayer as he came with the robe. It was glory, it was achievement, it was freedom from the slavery of ambition.

"The white palace . . . the King's golden daughter. . . ."

TIMOTHY DISBROW COREVANT said: "A million dollars, more or less—at twenty-five. In business you couldn't do it today. Taxes." He looked out of the window, a weary man. "It's a new day and age. Daisy—well, Daisy is her own woman. . . . You've quit the ring, of course. You would. . . . You are smart, Tom. I have no further objections. You've done your job. Just—make her happy, will you?" He continued to stare out of the window of the palace. The King was conquered. That was that. . . .

It was not really a palace, Tom knew. It lay in the valley of the Delaware River, surrounded by many expensive acres.

Originally the house had been built by a Dutchman in 1770, but the hands of many had been upon it, and now it spread over ground which had once been kitchen yard, orchard, dusty road. It had many rooms and in them was furniture brought from all over America, priceless pieces picked by the unerring eye of Corevant, who had nothing to do but buy Colonial furniture and think about his daughter and his errant son.

Yes, the palace was a farmhouse, and the farm held pigs and cows and dogs and chickens and many horses both for work and saddle. But to Tom it was a white palace. Coming from the orphanage at ten, he had seen few places of luxury.

At ten, he had worked on a poor sort of farm. At fifteen, big and strong, he had learned to box. At sixteen, Ord Bradley had found him. Boxing had been his dish, from the start. Boxing, and that mysterious heritage which drove him to study, to contemplation. For he had always aspired to his dreams, never content to wallow in them with wistfulness; and through knowledge he thought he might come closer to a star . . . or a golden girl.

Ord Bradley, bless him, had been honest, clever, patient, understanding of all. Ord Bradley had made a lot of money out of it, and Tom Mulroy had made a million. Whether Ord had any of his share now was another matter; Tom had never been able to comprehend the devious ways of Ord with a dollar. But Tom's investments were solid; Tom knew what he wanted. . . .

Daisy was at the pool. It was a blue elliptical lake, set among the trees but not under them, so that no leaves fell upon its serene surface. In his swim trunks Tom moved slowly, drinking it all in, smiling at the people. There were the Chenleys, the Broussons, the Laceys and a girl named Toodle Welcome who did not seem to belong there—nor did she seem to care. She was Ed Corevant's current girl, off Broadway.

And there was Daisy.

Daisy was small and blonde. There were millions of pretty blondes in the world, but none other was golden all the way through, he thought, his heart leaping. Her smile was quick, coming to him. Her loveliness came from her smile, the roundness and firmness of her young body; from her dainty feet and ankles; from the strong, ready little hand he gave him. How could Tom know whence her beauty sprang? She was the golden girl from the palace on high, the King's daughter; and she loved him . . . She loved Tom Mulroy from the orphanage.

The wonder of it would never leave him, he thought. For one moment he stood there, smiling with lips only, a big man with every eye upon him and the wonder of it in him, and a slight chill went down his spine, a fear that fate had been too kind—too kind.

Then he was talking easily with them, as he had taught himself to do, accepting their congratulations, for even they understood that being champion of the world was an attainment. They were pleasant-enough people and they accepted him. They were amazed at him, his ease of manner; they said privately he must come of good parentage because how could he be as he was, with them, unless he had good blood? This they said and sincerely believed, the Chenleys, the Broussons, the Laceys.

Toodle Welcome said in a throaty, delightful voice bred of stage training, "Tom, you're the greatest boxer of modern times, and that knockout was superb. But a little lucky, wasn't it? He was coming in hard; you clipped him. You're giving him another chance?"

She was a dark girl, very sleek in the French-type bathing-suit excuse which exposed so much of her. Her eyes were dark and honest and the sleekness was an acquired defense, he knew, like his own armor in company of this sort.

He said to her, "I am retiring, as of now."

Ed Corevant said, "Sure. Why go on when you've made yours? What can he do to top what he's done?" He was a little drunk, as usual, but the blond youth, almost Daisy's twin, had a sapient tongue. "It's Tom's time to enjoy life. How about a stinger, Tom?"

"Scotch," said Tom. "Scotch and water." He sat beside Daisy on the edge of the pool. Her suit was still dry. She had, he knew, waited to swim with him.

She said, "I can read it in your face, Tom. I know what he said. It's true, isn't it, Tom—our dream?"

He said, "Shall we go in?" He wanted her away from them, by herself, where he could tell her.

She slid into the pool, turned on her back, kicking a little, looking at him.

He swam beside her, his mouth near her ear. He said, "I love you. . . . I love you. . . . I love you. . . ."

"Yes," she whispered. "Yes, Tom, yes."

It was enough—it was more than enough. He was hot all over, then he was cold again, although the sun had warmed the water and the air was balmy, as it is at that time in September before the equinox, when the air is warmer than August in the valley of the Delaware.

They came out of the water, hiding the extreme of happiness which was theirs, and she drank Ed's stinger while Tom drank the Scotch. He loved the taste of the good liquor slipping down his dry throat. He had leisure at last to sip, to taste the fine things. No longer need he struggle and hurry and fight with both fists. He was safe home.

They used to play a game at the orphanage, and that was the expression when they tagged up: "Safe home."

The talk went on smoothly, about horses and the coming hunts, and the theater when they had time to go up to New York; though they seldom went to New York because the country life was so good and they had themselves, their own crowd, with others coming and going but never quite touching. Did any of them ever quite touch each other? Maybe it was better they did not, Tom thought—staring, as he could not help staring, at Daisy.

Toodle Welcome said in his ear, "Congratulations. Ed just tipped me off. You've really made tops, now—if you can stick it."

He said, "I can take it, Toodle."

"I hope so," she said. "You deserve it. I hope for you."

He smiled it off with forced impersonality, and then she had to go, driving Ed's car, because Ed had had too many drinks, to drive. Tom watched them, wondering about the sleek girl and the spoiled brother of his golden girl. . . .

The Mulroys saw Europe falling apart, shuddering in the shadow of the giant in the East; they saw the Orient teeming with its millions of forgotten ones; they saw Rio and Buenos Aires sparkling in a shiny new sun. They were gay and they were happy for that year. The sheen was on them, a belief in the endurance of the passion between them—that glowing, youthful, ever-fresh thing.

They came back to the Delaware Valley; Timothy Corevant, seeing his daughter happy, closed his eyes and was content to quit a life which had ceased to interest him. So now Daisy was very rich.

Tom learned to ride to the hunt. His body lost the soft layer of flesh which he had—like all big men—acquired with disuse of his muscles. People came—the Laceys, the Chenleys, the Broussons—and often they stayed for a while; then the Mulroys visited for week-ends with them, in turn. Tom got along with everyone, always; his disposition was easy and he was thoughtful of others. He never drank like Ed Corevant—but of course Ed had been born among them and it did not matter about him.

Tom was amazed to find Toodle Welcome still in Ed's company. He had thought that she was like himself: one to forge ahead, to take from life the good things. She had an important part in a musical show and a good salary; why she went about with Ed, Tom could never understand. The boy was a gentle, no-good boy.

Tom sat with Ord Bradley in the men's bar of the Ritz. Ord was dressed to the nines, as always, but his shirt was seeing second-day service, a sign Tom well recognized.

"Seems funny to see you drinking," Ord said.

"I don't take much," said Tom. "It's a symbol."

"Sure. But it seems damn' funny. You look good, Tom. You maybe go two, huh?"

"Two hundred and five," Tom admitted reluctantly.

"Well, what of it?" Ord revolved his glass in stubby fingers. He was aging, but a quick wit and humor was in him. He was a lovable man, a good man. "Saw Rack the other day. He's beefin'—says you were lucky. You know he's not taking much these days. Nobody wants him. He hurts them. And they say his title is synthetic, because you retired and he won it by elimination."

Tom said, "I knocked him out."

"He says you were lucky. He says he would have caught you before the fifteenth. He says to remember Conn and Louis."

"They always say that," said Tom shortly. "Anyway, I'm through; you know I'm through. You know what I wanted—now I've got it."

"Sure," said Ord. "Any babies comin'?"

"Not yet," said Tom. "You know Mr. Corevant died. And then things happen."

"Sure, things happen."

"You all right, Ord? You need anything?"

"I need a new head. You got a new head in your pocket? A man gave me a system and it looked good. The ponies must have heard about it; they hate systems. But I'm all right. I got Charley Rice, now."

"Rice? He's got china in his chin!"

"Class he has got, too. I like the classy ones. You don't want to make another half a million fightin' Rack, do you?" He grinned when he said it, but his eyes were sharp. "Give you something to do. Keep you sharp."

Tom said, "Stop kidding. My wife would leave me."

"Sure—I know. Well, gotta line up something for Rice. Take it easy, Tom. Call me any time." He went out, head high, swaggering a little and that was a tip-off too, because Ord never walked like that unless things were tough. Tom could do nothing for Ord, because people were built like that and Tom had learned you could do nothing about people—but he could worry, because Ord was his friend.

It occurred to him that all he ever got around to doing lately was to worry about something or someone. He had everything, yet he was wor-

"I'm through," said Tom. "You know what I wanted; now I've got it."

ried. He was looking for Ed Corevant, now; the boy had been missing for several days. Daisy was always worried too, worried about her brother. Tom was becoming a sort of attendant to the errant young man.

He called Toodle Welcome. She said, "I haven't seen him, but I think I can find him, Tom. I'll deliver him to you at the Ritz."

"Just tell me. I'll get him," he said.

"No. You wouldn't understand. Wait for me."

He waited. In an hour she was there, and Ed was in the cab. She said, "It was marijuana this time. Be easy with him, Tom; he has a problem."

"He *is* a problem!" exploded Tom. "How can you bother with him? You're such a decent, healthy girl."

"I am healthy," she said. Her eyes had a way of slanting at him, examining him, then widening, trying to tell him something. "He is ill. Understand that, Tom."

Ed Corevant was wan-eyed, gray of skin, trembling. Tom drove through the Lincoln Tunnel and down Tunelle Avenue and across the Skyway to the Somerville route. Then Ed said, "You're such a good guy, Tom. You'll never know what it is to be weak and foolish. It's awful to be born rich and have appetites."

"H'm!" said Tom.

"You wouldn't know. You wouldn't understand." Ed drooped, sleeping, mumbling.

All the way down it rankled in Tom. First Ord, then Toodle, then this drunken, sottish youth, had told him in one way or another that he was lacking in understanding. Ord had been subtle, but the meaning was there, that Rack had some right to feel Tom had not given him a chance in a return bout. The others had told him flatly that he did not understand.

What else did he have, he wondered? If not understanding, if not aid for others, what good was his present life?

Daisy said, "But you don't know what Ed's life has been. Father gave up trying, and gave up trying to make Ed try. Ed never had any guidance. I think you could do something with him. He admires you. But you just hate him."

Tom said, " I don't hate anyone. I'm just weary."

"You think he's worthless. And who are you to judge Ed, anyway? What possible basis have you for judging him?" Her eyes were hot.

It was their first serious quarel; it had been going on for two days and neither knew how to stop it. The palace was not on high, nor so white, these days. The King was dead. And the golden daughter was—Tom's wife.

He looked hard at her. Anger made her sparkle, but there was sullenness in her, a discontent lying deep. He did not even dare speak of babies any more; she had cut that off day before yesterday, shutting him out. Now she was talking about Ed as though he were their baby and Tom an unnatural father. It was a strange, twisted thing.

Tom said, "He should go to the ranch out West and try it there. Why shouldn't he fend for himself? Cut off his allowance. Your father had sense enough to give you the purse-strings because he thought you had sense enough to handle them. Send Ed away."

"I won't! I won't do it!" she cried. "He's sick!"

There was a moment then, in the spacious living-room, with the evening sun going down beyond the hill, with the countryside barely beginning to green with springtime, a moment among a million others, when the balance-wheel hung, undecided which way to swing. He recognized it now, as he had in the prize-ring. He asked, "Daisy, are you sure you're right?"

She said, "Right? Of course I'm right. You don't know—you couldn't know. You're—different."

"I'm afraid you're right," he said. The wheel swung.

That was all, for then, because they both had control and there was something left between them after the sheen wore off. But later the Broussons and the Laceys and the Chenleys were there for a dinner party and Ed appeared, in shocking shape, with Toodle Welcome absenting herself from a performance to bring him home, and Daisy rushing him upstairs.

Tom stood in the living-room and said, "I'm sorry, folks. That young no-good—"

The Broussons and Chenleys and the Laceys all stared at him. This had happened before, when he had made an unconsidered comment; it had happened many times. Now it was as if he had broken a solid rule of a code. It was as though he had finally displayed a complete lack of knowledge of everything for which they stood.

Someone said, "Why, Ed's all right. Just a boy, y'know."

Lacey said, "Seems like you'd be easier on the boy, Tom."

"More understanding. . . ." They were a united front, you had to say that for them. He looked at their ruddy faces, their shallow, resentful eyes.

He went out to the car with Toodle. He said, "Am I stupid?"

"Maybe," she answered. "I am; maybe you are, too."

He said, "Look here, you don't love that sot, do you?"

"Love? That's a loose word. I wouldn't know what you mean by 'love.' Some people take it one way, some another. How is *your* love-life?"

He said, "I deserved that, Toodle. I'm sorry."

She smiled without mirth. "You and I, we have to learn things the hard way. We weren't born with all this." She gestured toward the white palace which no longer was on high. "Those people. They live in a tiny world, cottoned by their personal limitations. We have to learn, to study—and we have to act. There is no compulsion on *them* to perform, but we must go on, doing something. Goodby for now, Tom."

He went indoors, as if he were a stranger. Daisy came down and the people acted as though nothing had happened. They ate and drank stingers, very good ones which Lacey or Brousson or Chenley concocted.

There were other things—one right after another. Tom thought often of Toodle Welcome's brief speech, the night of the dinner-party. The breach widened. Daisy was always busy at charities or social affairs or something. The breach widened and Tom stood helplessly in the ebbing tide of his dream—and died a little.

He said to her in the morning on a springtime day when the real green had taken the valley of the Delaware: "I'm going to fight Tetrazini again."

She came to her feet, honestly shocked. She was wearing white, a short-sleeved dress for sports, and she was slim and exquisite. "Tom! Have you gone mad?"

"Maybe," he said. His face was tense, his hands taut in the pockets of his jacket. "It's something to do, at least. And Rack does deserve another chance. I was wrong about that."

She said, "Tom! All our friends—The idea of it—going back to that awful business! You said you used it only to an end. You said you were not really a fighter."

"Then I am not really anything," he said.

"It will make me seem ridiculous."

"You mean it will seem that I'm not satisfied with my life here, with you? You mean people will think I need more than that?"

She did not answer at once. She stared at him; she had never been more golden than in that morning sunlight. Her voice was very quiet when she spoke. "It is true, then: You are not satisfied. You're not!"

"Are you?"

She cried, "It's Ed! You keep fighting Ed instead of trying to help him."

He said, "It is not Ed."

"You think you can force me to temporize, to send Ed away, by holding this over me!" She had, for the first time, lost control.

He said gently, "You don't know me very well, do you, darling? I said I was fighting. The papers are signed. I am boxing in June, in the same ball-park."

"You cannot do it! I won't have it! I won't stand the ridicule, the insinuations—"

"Of your friends? Are they so important, the hunt club?" He was quietly insistent. "The people who keep you so busy entertaining them and being entertained by them that you have no time to raise a family?"

"You can't talk about them like that!"

"I'm not talking about them—I'm talking about us."

But he saw that it wasn't any use. He had lived two years in the white palace on high, two years in the King's house with the King's golden daughter—and it had come to this. Talking with her wasn't any use. . . .

Tom went up to the camp he had always used. Ord was there and when he saw all Tom's luggage, he pursed his lips as though to whistle. But no whistle sounded in the fresh, clear air of northern Jersey. They moved into the old cottage, and Tom's things filled it.

Daisy did not come to the camp. The Chenleys came and the Broussons and the Laceys. They came and stared with great curiosity and much chatter. It was something new, something they had never hoped to see: someone they knew training to trade punches with another big man they did not know. They agreed that Daisy could not stand the sight of fighting, had never been able to watch training; they were very polite about it and Tom was polite to them; all lying in their teeth.

Then Ed Corevant came. He was almost sober; he came to the cottage in the evening, alone in his car. He stared at Tom's possessions, the many bags, the portable radio-phonograph with the many recordings. He said, "I felt it. I knew it. You've moved out."

Tom said, "Best keep out of it, Ed."

Ed made a gesture. "That's for the others, the people who always do right. The one-or-two cocktail people. I'm just a bum. I don't have to mind my own business."

Tom said, "I can make you, Ed."

"How? By beating me up?" Ed was amused. "Not a nice guy like you—you're too damned good! So you've quit?"

Tom said, "Ed, what are you getting at?"

"I like you. I admire you. I think you're right in going back to your business. You see—I can think, sometimes. I can see—things." He sat straight on a chair, looking oddly like his sister. His smile was ready and guileless. "I love Daisy, you understand? I love my sister."

Tom said, "You should. You've certainly—"

"Don't bother to say it. I know it. I'm no good. But I love Daisy. I'd do anything for Daisy. Tom—don't quit!"

Tom said, "Keep out of it, Ed. I know you mean well, but it isn't any use."

"I think it is. I hope you win, Tom. I hope you win all the way down the line. You're the best thing ever happened to our family. I hope you beat Tetrazini and I hope you are always happy. But I hope you don't ever quit, not like this." He stood up, his dissipated young face handsome and appealing. "It's your wagon, Tom—I'm not butting in. But don't quit!" He went out, graceful—and damned.

The cicadas were loud that night, but Tom did not hear them. He sat until the moon rose high in the heavens, his chin sunk on his chest. He slept without rest.

For the first time in his life he had been knocked off his feet. . . . All the nightmares of wondering what would happen if he were knocked down had now been resolved, he thought.

Toodle Welcome came on another day. They sat and sipped milk after the workout and she said, "Tom, you're two years away. It shows in your boxing. How do you feel about it, Tom?"

"I beat him before."

She said, "You should have fought him last year."

"It takes time," he muttered. Then he said, "It just worked out this way." He could not discuss Daisy, not with anyone.

She said, "I'm sorry, Tom. You'll be good, of course. You're always good, always carrying a banner."

"And a torch, Toodle," Tom said quietly.

"Yes—always the torch," she agreed. She added, "Ed has bet his quarterly allowance on you. He is fond of you, Tom."

"Yes. I know. Poor Ed—a fool, a weakling, but loyal."

"A fool? Yes. A weakling? Perhaps. But a man, Tom."

"You think that? You believe it?"

She said, "I've never quit believing that. You've got to have faith. Tom, I won't say anything—just that I'm sorry for you." She arose. She was wearing a diamond she had bought with her own money. She was beau-

tiful and desirable and good. She went away in her new car.

He listened to the frogs in the hollow, to the heavy voices of his card-playing sparmates and trainer. Things lived, people lived, life always went on, always and without cessation. People moved toward the grave even while they slept. Yet there were things to do, hard facts to be considered and there was no time for rest. He sat under his particular and personal black cloud, and made himself use his mind.

ORD BRADLEY said, "Tenth round, Tom. You all right, kid?"

He had been down. For the first time in his life he had been knocked off his feet. The world had turned topsy-turvy and all the nightmares of wondering what would happen if he were knocked down had now been resolved, he thought. He had been down.

He said, "How am I doing?"

"You had him; then he nailed you—twice!" said Ord. His eyes were haunted with worry. "You got up too fast the first time."

So he had been down twice in the ninth. He had boxed Rack's ears off for eight and a half rounds. Rack looked a mess, sitting over there. Then Rack had caught him. Two years away had done this to his timing, his speed. He had been down twice, but he remembered only once.

The whistle sounded. Ord gave him a last smell of the bottle. He got up, his knees twitching, and the bell rang and Rack was coming. There was hell in Rack's eyes—he was all fighter, all killer. He was ready to tear Tom apart and make the crown a better fit upon his round hard brave head.

The thousands who never loved the dancer, the boxer, now stood howling for his blood. Rack bristled like one of the dogs in the hunting-pack down in the valley of the Delaware. Savagely his hard hands sought Tom's body.

Tom boxed. His left found Rack's countenance. He stabbed it there, making his legs behave. He moved away from Rack's right. He kept the left high. His muscles were heavy with fatigue they had never known before. Rack bulled him and he danced and spun, letting Rack go by and into the ropes.

But he could not follow. Something was lacking. He waited, conserving the strength he would need. Rack spun and returned.

Never had the champion recovered balance so fast. The right hand came out of nowhere. It clubbed Tom behind the ear. It drove him downward so that his knees hit forcibly against the canvas. He hung there, on hands and knees, head down.

"High in the white palace . . . the golden girl . . .

The referee leaned, frowning, counting. Tom moved his left knee, got a solid purchase with his left foot. He pushed with both hands. He came up and the referee was staring into his eyes as he rubbed resin from the gloves.

Then Tetrazini was coming again, inexorable, an artisan at his task. The gloves beat and pounded. Tom gasped at the force of them. He tied up the heavy arms and hung on. He had to do something, he knew, he had to get out of this. He had to!

He set himself on his heels. Rack pulled away, fighting. Tom stood stock-still.

Rack came back, slashing.

And Tom slugged back. The thousands went mad, leaping and baying. The two big men in ring center met head and head. Their arms went in and out, like pistons, buffeting, smashing.

Then one big man staggered and the other pounced. There was another of those moments illuminated in time; caught now on the celluloid of spinning film for all posterity to see and know.

Then Tom Mulroy was flat upon his back. He heard not, neither did he see, and for that time mercifully he did not suffer. The ghastly rubber mouthpiece fell and rolled in a tiny circle at the feet of the crouching referee. *"The white palace on high . . . the golden girl . . . the golden girl . . . the golden girl . . ."*

"Ten . . . and *out!*"

Bleeding, semi-blinded, the champion bent. He picked up Tom tenderly in his great arms. He carried him to where Ord helped, stony-white, sickened.

Tetrazini panted: "Geez, this guy was great. Geez, I didn't think he could fight like that. Geez, Ord, I love this guy. I love him, you hear?"

"It's all right, Rack. You were good in there. He didn't have enough in there tonight."

"What he had was murder," said Rack. "He was short of it, but it was murder."

"He's a fine boy," said Ord. "A fine boy."

THEY came into the hospital room. They were shadows for a moment, then he could see them. There was no serious concussion, the doctor had said, although no man had ever taken more punishment.

Tom said, "Hello, people. Hello, golden girl."

"When I saw you being beaten, I knew how much I love you," she wailed. "I can't stand for you to suffer."

Illustrated by Raymond Sisley

Daisy was weeping. "I let you do it. I was wrong, Tom. I let you be beaten." She threw herself across the bed, the only abandoned move he had ever seen her make before witnesses.

"Why, no, Daisy. I did it myself. It's all right. . . ."

"When I saw you being beaten, I knew—I knew how much I love you," she wailed. "I can't stand for you to suffer."

He said, "Why, Daisy—darling—"

"Ed warned me. He warned me you'd be beaten and I'd be sorry. Ed said I was a fool to let you go."

He held her tight and looked at Ed over her shaking body and at Toodle, who stood in the background. He looked back at Ed.

"We're married," said Ed. His face worked, the lines still deep. "We're going to that ranch. She—she's giving up her job and everything. She wanted to, Tom. Is it all right, Tom?"

"You're asking *me?*"

Ed said, "If you and Daisy can make it . . . if Daisy can see it. If you can go through it and come back safe, can't I?"

Tom said, "You've got your answers. Right behind you."

Toodle said, "It'll be all right, Ed. It'll be fine on the ranch. We'll do good there and then—"

Ed said, "Will we, Tom?"

Tom clutched at his wife's shoulders. He said, "You go on. As soon as your honeymoon is over we'll join you. All right, Daisy?"

"Yes . . . oh, yes!" She raised her face.

Tom said, "We'll all work hard and get in shape."

Ed cried, "And you'll fight him again?"

"It's even steven, isn't it?" demanded Tom. "It takes two out of three, doesn't it?"

Daisy said, "Yes, Tom. Oh, yes . . ."

"We'd better go. I must pack," said Toodle. Her face was serene, strong. "We'll be seeing you two. I'm so happy! It was worth the beating, Tom, wasn't it, to win?"

They were gone. Tom said, "She loves him. He must be good. You love him; she loves him. You can't be wrong. I was wrong."

Daisy said, "Tom—please—no more rights and wrongs. No more, not ever. Just you and me, working things out. I don't ever want to be right again. Not ever! And Tom—now I want our baby."

He said, "I love you, darling. I love you, I love you, I love you."

"Yes," she said "Oh, yes . . . yes . . . yes . . . yes."

The sheen had come back to it, for them. But even when it wore thin, he thought, he must remember to wear it like a golden robe. Because with her, he knew now, with the dream of her he was complete. Without her he was lost.

It was enough. It was more than enough.

Cursing Is Bad

A tale of the Norsemen who harried the British coast, and fought among themselves over the spoils.

by DE WITT NEWBURY

THE hermit had come from his wattled hut to rail at the raiders. He stood on a bank above the sloping path, a skeleton figure with gray beard fluttering over ragged goatskins.

"Woe to the grasping and bloody-handed!" he screamed. "Woe to the robbers of holy places!"

Trooping below, the mailed men understood. His English speech differed little from their Norse. They turned weather-bitten faces, scowling under iron caps. A lint-whiskered fellow started aside, swinging an axe.

Edric Gudrodson, the leader, called out sharply: "Don't strike, Gaut! That would be unmanly."

Big Gaut came back, growling as usual. "I should chop up the bundle of bones!"

"Save your chopper for better work," Edric ordered; then he answered the hermit good-naturedly: "We have shed no blood, Old One; neither have we robbed. The priests were sensible. They paid us to spare their lives and their Holy House."

It was the truth. He had led his men inland from the Blackwater to harry a great church; and now they were marching back to their ship, heavy with booty: vessels of silver and gilded bronze, sacks of rudely minted coins, bundles of dyed cloth—all won without striking a blow.

Yes, the priests had been wise!

Some of the Viking crew had grumbled—Gaut loudest of all—because they had done no fighting. But Edric was satisfied. Every man would go home hale, hearty and successful. There would be comfort around the hearths, instead of mourning.

Edric was wise too, though young to be a leader of gangers, with no more than a short yellow fleece on his chin.

He laughed as he looked back at his forty carls, sweating happily under their loads. The richest prize was a roll of crimson stuff. Halvard Hammer, chief of the stem-men, was carrying it on a mailed shoulder.

As the band paused to rest, Gaut the Growler stretched out a hand. "Give me the pall-cloth," he urged. "It's my turn."

Halvard pushed him away. Gaut was chief of the afterguard, and there was rivalry between them.

A cry came from the hermit. He was staring down with wild eyes, pointing a bony finger. "Pall-cloth!" he shrieked. "It hung in the minster kirk, behind the altar!"

Edric glanced up again. "What of that, Old One? The priests gave it to us. We had only to ask, and they tore it down."

"You are guilty of sacrilege!" the hermit mouthed. "Accursed be heathen despoilers! Accursed the brood of hell!"

Once more Gaut started up the bank, axe raised. "Let me slay the old he-goat," he begged. "His bleat has an ill sound!"

"No!" Once more Edric beckoned him back.

"Cursing is bad magic," Gaut muttered. "Even Christian cursing."

Edric laughed again, and motioned his men forward. It was best to be moving, he thought. If the East Saxons should gather, there'd be a fine flying of arrows and spears, a fine hewing of shields—for the Essex farmers were sturdy folk.

So the gangers tramped on, while the hermit stood with lean, uplifted arms, and his wild voice followed them on the wind.

"A curse goes with the pall-cloth! It will bring confusion! Dissension among ye! Strife and death to many! Aye, death! Death!"

Some of the mailed men looked back, frowning. Gaut growled again.

"*Fram!*" Edric ordered. "Forward! Let the graybeard screech."

THEY found the *Urar Ox* safely anchored in the River Blackwater, its stem cutting the tide, its stem-head—a bull's head with gilded horns—swinging as if eager to be off. The twenty ship-guards shouted welcome. And from the afterdeck old Kar the Fish waved a gnarled hand.

The raiders threw their booty down on the strand—the cups and bowls, the jingling money-bags, the bundles of cloth. Most of those bundles contained churchly vestments, stuff only good for women's gear. But the pall-cloth was a huge piece of Southland silk.

Halvard Hammer unrolled and displayed an end. "It will cover our dirty sail," he said. "Aye, we'll fare in splendid style! Every ship at sea, every Vikman at home, will admire our brave showing!"

All the men shouted, at that. The ship-guards began to heave at the anchor, warping shoreward to take the rest aboard.

Edric shrugged. It seemed a waste of work and goods to stitch that crimson cloth over the sea-stained canvas. Yet if his carls were pleased, he was pleased too.

No one remembered the hermit's cursing.

THE wind blew fair from the south. The ship *Urar Ox* ran before it, the stem-head lifting gilded horns over the waves, and the blood-red sail bellying above.

Essex was left behind, and Suffolk. Off to larboard lay the land of the North Folk; but none of the crewmen looked toward the looming coast, nor did any look out to sea.

They were lounging on the benches, fore and aft. The stem-men had faced backward; they were eying that bulging crimson sail, a grin of pleasure on every hairy face. The men of the afterguard were looking at their side of the sail. No red silk there! Nothing but sailcloth, dingy and rimed with salt. Every man was scowling glumly.

Edric had been thinking of other things. Standing on the afterdeck beside old Kar, he had been thinking of the good wind, of a quick voyage home, in time for the harvest.

Voices roused him. Glancing down to the waist, he saw that Gaut the Growler was stooping under the sail, shouting angrily.

"It's unfair! You forward carls have all the fun and finery! You watch the splendid pall-cloth, while we see dirt and patches! We should turn the sail."

Halvard Hammer laughed back at him. "Foolishness! The best side of a sail must be the forward side!"

Magic

Illustrated by JOHN COSTIGAN, N.A.

"The after side catches the wind!" Gaut blustered. "Well, let us change places. You fellows come aft!"

"Certainly not!" Halvard refused. "It's our luck to have the crimson cloth, yours to have dirt and patches. Good enough for you!"

The afterguard began to get up from the benches, muttering and swearing. Gaut growled, "May the Fenris-wolf bite you! Then let us take down the pall-cloth and share it. It will make red caps for all."

The foreguard raised a clamor of protest, and Halvard laughed again, more loudly. "Handsome you'd be in a red silk cap, Growler! Like a bear with a bloody head!"

"I'll give you a bloody head!" Gaut fumed.

He went staggering back from a violent shove, and Halvard was there under the sail—a hulking lump with a faceful of rusty bristles, swinging the war-hammer he always carried.

"I'll flatten your thick skull!" Halvard rumbled. "We'll fight as soon as we land!"

"We'll fight here and now!" Gaut bellowed. He fumbled for his axe, while behind him the afterguard reached for weapons. There was a commotion forward, the stamp of feet, the ring of metal, as the foreguard rose.

Edric had stood gaping with astonishment, the quarrel had flared so quickly. Now he sprang into the waist, thrusting men back on the benches, pushing them aside.

"Peace!" he roared. "A shameful thing, for grown men to squabble like children! Peace! Or I myself will tear down the cloth and cast it to the sea-sprites!"

His efforts quelled the carls for a moment. And in the sudden quiet old Kar sang out:

"Ware! Be ware! A longship to larboard!"

Instantly everything else was forgotten. Every eye turned to the strange ship, men squinting under hard palms. Edric leaped to the afterdeck again.

The craft had slipped from behind a headland and was quartering out under a wide black-striped sail. It was longer and lower than the *Urar Ox*, with a dragon prow.

Edric counted the rows of painted shields along the side.

"Eighty in their ship-gang, at least," he said. "Twenty more than we number. Can you make out the banner, Kar Fish?"

The steersman was peering, sea-wise and keen-sighted. "A flying raven. Aye, I know the sign—and the ship. Its chief is Torgny the Jomsviking."

Edric could see helms shining in the sun, the flash of spearheads. So those fighting men were from the Danish stronghold, Jomsbourg! Harriers of a lawless brotherhood, true wolves of the sea. Not like his own men, who were farmers at home, only voyaging in the slack midsummer season.

He shouted to his crew: "Jomsvikings! Get ready for battle!" Then he chuckled at the eager scurrying, the pulling on of *ring-brynies*—mail coats—and the buckling of belts. His lads were hardy enough!

The dragon swept nearer, swerving to run alongside. Both crews showed weapons, bristling at each other like strange dogs. The Danes were a mixed lot. Dark beards showed among the fair and ruddy beards, here and there a snub-nosed Vendish face.

Perhaps they had expected easier prey. Their chief held up his shield with the unpainted side out, the sign of peace.

Torgny was a giant in a gilded helm, his black beard braided in two tails. "I thought you had the finest sail ever spread!" he laughed. "Now I see it's only half fine. Lower, and we'll talk."

Both sails came down. Warily Edric stepped to his railing. "I am Edric Gudrodson," he said, "and you are Torgny the Black. Have you had luck?"

The Jomsviking nodded. "Men call me Raven Feeder. Why, our voyage is not yet over. But you must have done well, to win such a kingly pall-cloth!"

"Fairly," Edric admitted; he didn't hint of the other wealth, lest the Danes grow greedy. "We took it from an East Saxon kirk."

"Aye, the churches are rich picking! You should harry another—and cover the back of your sail, as well as the front!" Torgny roared his laughter.

Edric kept his temper. "Thanks for the counsel, Raven Feeder. We can manage our business."

"Can you?" Torgny waved a hand shoreward. "The North Folk have rich Holy Houses—if you can find them! They are hidden deep in marsh and forest, for fear of such bold harriers. Luck to you, Son of Gudrod!"

He boomed an order. Men hauled at hempen tackle; the blackstriped sail creaked up and caught the wind.

Edric watched the dragon ship surge away northward. "Let it outrun us," he said. "The farther, the better!"

Abruptly he turned from the railing. Here indeed was some business to manage! The danger over, Gaut and Halvard were back at their dispute. They faced each other across the folded sail, armed and threatening.

Edric vaulted down to them. "Enough!" he chided. "Better to fight the Danes than among ourselves!" Suddenly he remembered the cursing hermit. "That Saxon *hrutr* spoke truth—that the pall-cloth would cause dissension. We should get rid of it!"

Gaut checked himself, showing a troubled face. "By Skogul, he foretold many deaths! I don't like that." His face cleared. "But the Jomsviking spoke truth, too. We should raid another kirk and get another cloth!"

Halvard broke in. "I agree to that, Growler! Then none could mock us for having a half-fine sail. Likely we'd win more silver and gold, to boot!"

Immediately the whole crew raised a cheer, beating shields with weapons. It was plain that they all agreed.

Edric considered. He was chief because the *Urar Ox* was his, a gift from his father, the *lendermann* Gudrod. Yet the gangers were all volunteers, all freemen. They obeyed him in fighting and shipwork. When it came to making plans, every man had a say.

He looked up at the steersman, straining at the tiller to steady the drifting ship. "Kar Fish!" he called. "You know this coast better than any of us. Is there a Holy House within our reach?"

Kar's grizzled beard wagged up and down. "I have heard there are hidden houses of holy men and women, as Torgny said. I know surely of a river town—and every town has a kirk. We could sack it, likely enough, or make the folk pay ransom."

Edric turned back to his carls. "Briskly, there! Up with the sail!"

They jumped to obey. The half-crimson sheet rose and bellied full. The *Urar Ox* gathered way.

The English town was not taken by surprise. As they rowed up a tidal stream, winding through wood and marshland, old Kar pointed at a column of smoke. It rose from a *howe*—a mound—that topped the flat forest.

"The English keep watch," he said. "They have lit their beacon."

"No matter," Edric told him. "We are honest fighters, not sneaking thieves."

Another reach of river, another bend, and the town was in sight. A wall of mixed stone and turf surrounded the houses. They were mostly of plastered wattles; the wooden church bulked biggest. Fishing-boats were moored at a rude jetty under the wall.

The town gate faced downstream. It was already closed, a mass of spiked timbers, and already the townfolk had manned the wall.

Kar swung prow to strand, beaching the ship. The raiders swarmed ashore, mailed and weaponed, shouting their loudest. Edric checked their rush. Alone he walked toward the gate, lifting his shield to guard against arrows.

The townsmen were armed, too. There were young lads and old grandfathers on the wall, as well as sturdy fellows, all ready to defend their homes, all in war gear of some sort.

Edric hailed them. "Englishmen, we are Norsemen of the Vik. We don't slay without reason. Satisfy us, and you and your town are safe."

The chief elderman answered, a pot-bellied man with a white beard. "We have no wealth—nothing! We are poor churls who sweat hard for a little barley-bread and thin ale!"

"And fish?" Edric laughed. "Surely you have fish? At any rate, there's a kirk. Bring out the silver things! And the rich hangings!"

"Why do we wait? I

can guide you by secret meres and flows, where your ship can go at high tide. Come, hurry!"

The elderman shook his head. "The kirk is bare. I swear there is only a wooden image of our Lord!"

The Norsemen were growing impatient. "Sound the war horn!" they yelled. "We'll climb that niddering wall in a moment! Give us English goods or English blood!"

Edric still parleyed. "We don't want the image, Elderman. But we know of Holy Houses—great, wealthy places—concealed in the wilds. Tell us how to find one, and we'll leave."

"Never!" The elderman shouted as loudly as any Norseman. "Do your worst, heathen! We'd rather get our banes than be such traitors!"

"Very well!" Edric thundered. "Your town shall be burned, every man struck down, and your women taken for thralls!"

The threat did no good. Bows twanged on the wall. An arrow grazed his helm; two stuck in his shield. Another whacked his right shoulder, pricking through the mail-rings.

Behind him, his carls loosed a whirring flight of shafts, and big Gaut gave tongue. "Blow the horn, Son of Gudrod! My axe is thirsty!"

"My hammer is hungry!" Halvard cried.

Edric strode away from the wall. The arrow-sting had angered him. "We'll punish their stubbornness," he said grimly, "and do it properly! Halvard, have your gang hew a tree-stock to batter down the gate. The afterguard follow me, and burn the fishing-boats."

He led the thirty men to the jetty, all sheltering behind their round shields. Some English kept pace with them along the wall, angry but helpless. They dared not sally out to save the boats.

Gaut kindled an end of tarred rope with his fire-stone. "The sails will blaze!" he chuckled. "The greasy planks will crackle!"

Instead of using the smoldering torch, he stood still and pointed with it: at a head in the water midstream—a moving head that trailed long fair hair. "A swimmer!" he exclaimed.

Edric jumped into a fishing-boat. "Cast off! Shove out!"

Half a dozen men tumbled in, seized oars, and the boat shot into the stream. At sight of it, the swimmer writhed around, diving under water. Edric ran to the bow, leaned over.

"Stroke starboard!" he barked. "Once more! Ah!" Seeing a swirl below him, he plunged an arm deep to grasp a fistful of floating hair, and hauled the swimmer dripping over the side.

Then he stared in amazement, as did the others. Gaut growled: "A *meyla maerski*—a maid of the sea."

The girl sat on the floorboards, her gray gown clinging wetly to her long-limbed, young body. She wrung water from her yellow hair and looked around with blue, brave eyes. "I'm no mermaid," she said scornfully. "I am Norse! As you are, by your tongue."

Edric frowned, perplexed. "Norse? Aye, so you seem, girl. How come you here? Why were you swimming?"

"Because the boats were all on this side. I was seeking help from the townsmen—only to find the town beleaguered! So I ask aid of you warriors, for I know that Norsemen can fight!"

"Fight?" Edric was puzzled. "What folk, if not the English?"

"The Danes! The sea-robbers who harry the House of Holy Women, where I serve!"

"Humph!" Edric grunted. "Come ashore and tell us more."

She told in a few words, standing barefoot and wrapped in a borrowed seacape, while the Norsemen made a ring around her, and the English looked down from their wall and wondered.

"I am Froda, Aslak's daughter, from the Island Hising. Raiding Vends seized me as I drove cows to pasture. They butchered the cows for a feast. Me they carried off unharmed, in their dirty Vendish ship, and sold to a Friesland trader. He brought me here, with other thralls, to a market town called Thetford. There a priestess—the Prioress Eadgytha—bought me to serve her nuns."

"Have they treated you well?" Edric asked.

"Yes!" the girl answered. "They have made me a Christian; it's a good faith. I am to be one of them, if I stay."

"You shall not stay!" Edric declared. "We have taken you back from thralldom, and will take you home."

For the first time Froda smiled, and her beauty made him blink.

"That is my wish!" she cried; then the smile vanished. "First you must save the good Mother who befriended me, and the Sisters."

"You haven't told us of the Danes," Edric prompted.

"They are coming! A wounded marshman ran to warn us. He said they were seeking us as they never sought before, and coming near. Pushing their great ship through the mazed waterways, through forest and fen! I was the youngest and strongest of the women. I went for aid."

"It is Torgny and his Jomsbourg wolves," Edric nodded, "I'll wager my sword! Hark, *Hisinga meyla*—maid of Hising. Is your Holy House a rich place of silver bowls and candlesticks?"

Froda gazed at him, wide-eyed. "Yes, tall chief! That is why we fear freebooters."

"Has it hangings of fine pall-cloth? As big as a sail?"

She clapped her hands. "Oh, surely! There is one in the minster, sky blue with a yellow picture!"

He nodded approval. "Blue and yellow are good colors. And you can guide us?"

"Aye!" She stamped a bare foot. "Why do we wait? I can guide you by secret meres and flows, where your ship can go at high tide. Come, hurry!"

"We will!" Edric agreed, as his carls bayed joyfully and clattered weapons on shields. "No Jomsbourg crew shall loot such wealth!"

The Norsemen trooped back to their ship, without a backward look at the astonished town-dwellers. . . .

Going was hard, the ways narrow for the *Urar Ox*. At first they rowed up a tributary stream, then through a maze of crooked channels. Waterfowl rose from the rushes; beaver and otter swam away before them. Sometimes the men pushed with oars set against the banks. Sometimes the keel scraped soft bottom.

Edric encouraged them. "The tide rises. More water soon!"

But old Kar the Fish worried and swore. "By the great *Orm Maerski*—the Sea Serpent—we'll be stuck when the tide falls!"

"Then we'll wait for the next rise," Edric answered.

The carls needed no encouragement. They joked as they toiled. "A new thing," Halvard laughed, "to sail in a forest! Are we Vikings, or wood-dwelling outlaws?"

Always the girl Froda pointed the way and urged hurry. "The Danes are coming from the north," she said, "we from the south, so we cannot cut them off. We must reach the Holy House before them!"

Edric felt some pity when he thought of her innocence, her confidence that Norse Vikings would save Christian nuns from harrying. It was like calling one wolf-pack to guard the fold from another! His pack would fight, but only to snatch the prey. . . .

At last the ship was embayed in a pool and could go no farther. "We must land here," Froda directed, "and find a path. I'll lead!"

Edric pointed at her bare feet. "You'll have rough running."

"Do you think I am used to shoes in summer?" she scolded. "Come!"

He glanced at the surrounding thickets. "Our craft is well masked, and stranded until high tide. We will leave no ship-guards—we'll need all our strength. Every man ashore!"

The path was narrow and winding, made by the wild white cattle. Footing was firm, though; Froda trod it without hesitating, Edric just behind, and the carls filing after. Once a snow-white bull disputed the way.

Thrusting the girl back, Edric advanced on the great brute, shield up and sword drawn. The bull glared with red eyes and shook his horns. Then he crashed aside, snorting, into the forest.

"He knows us!" Edric chuckled. "He's brother to our *Urar Ox*."

There was smoke in the air now, and sounds came to their ears. The crackle of fire, the shrill shrieks of women, the hoarse shouts of men. "We are too late!" Froda wailed.

She ran faster, the mailed gangers lumbering behind. They came to rising ground and thinning trees. Suddenly they were at the edge of a wide clearing, a stretch of farmland in the middle of the wilds.

Before them stood the Holy House; a stone minster, square and tower-like, flanked by the long timber building where the nuns lived. To the left stood a cluster of barns and haystacks, all alight and blazing. Dead men lay in the foreground—the herders and farm-thralls who had served the convent, and had tried to defend it.

And off to the right was a reed-rimmed lake—with a great dragon-headed ship squatting in it, like some monster of the marsh.

The nuns had taken refuge in the church. But already the door had been broken and gray-robed women had been dragged out, a crowd of weeping, praying captives. Already the Jomsvikings were at the work of pillage. They swarmed in and out, bearing armloads of plunder down the stone steps. Red-handed, they sang and laughed, swore pagan oaths and bawled at each other.

Unseen as yet, Edric marshaled his men in the forest. "They outnumber us," he said. "Well, a trick will even the odds! See, their ship lies far out—they must have waded ashore when it stranded there. Now the craft rides free, the water is deeper!"

It was true. The sea-fed lake had risen with the tide.

Orders given, he lifted his war horn and blew an ear-shattering blast to warn the foe—that was only fair.

Then the Norse shield-wall went storming across the open ground—an iron wedge with Halvard and his hammer at the tip, twenty weapon-wielders to a side.

The Danes had taken warning! They poured from the invaded

Edric's sword flashed out like blue lightning! Under the shield and into that bare bull-throat.

church, dropping their booty. They came rushing from all directions. From the burning barns, from the lake shore, from guarding the captives. Torgny himself—the Raven Feeder—stood on the steps, roaring commands. He seemed bigger and uglier than any man should be!

The Norse wedge struck the gathering mob, struck solidly. It battered its way through to the minster steps. There it was halted, assailed in front and all along both flanks.

Weapons rose and fell, with the clang and clash of blades meeting each other, the sound of blows on mail and oaken shields. War cries added to the din: *"Fram, Norgemenn!" "Sklag, Jomsmenn!"*

Edric had not charged with the shield-wall. Instead he led twenty men straight to those burning barns, unopposed; the Danes were busy.

It was hot work! They pried and chopped with swords or axes, and every man seized a bit of burning wood. Big Gaut shouldered a beam with one end aglow.

They ran to the lake shore. Every man whirled his brand and flung it at the dragon-headed ship. Gaut hurled the beam like a huge javelin with a fiery point. It soared high and fell into the open waist.

Sparks rose, then tongues of flame.

Back at the church, the Jomsvikings saw and raised a cry. Many broke away from the fighting there and rushed to the lake. "Our ship is burning!" they yelled. "Strike the Norsemen! Save our longship!"

Edric's carls had faced around. At his word the rank parted to right and left, as if in flight. The Danes came on without pausing—dashed through the gap and into the water, to wade to their dragon.

But the lake was deeper now! They plunged and splashed—and went under, all heavy with iron mail!

Water surged and swirled. Wooden shields floated. Clutching hands broke the surface, and arms threshed. Wet helms rose, with gasping, drowning faces, only to sink again.

A FEW Jomsvikings floundered ashore. Norsemen met them ruthlessly, beat them back into the tide. Edric hewed at a weed-slimed head and toppled the last one.

"We could give them no mercy," he said sadly. "They were too many."

Gaut chuckled. "They are fewer now!"

No time to rest. The twenty made for the minster. Halvard's men had been holding their own; with the enemy weakened, they had pushed halfway up the steps.

Those steps were wet and red! Both Norsemen and Danes sprawled on the broad stones or rolled clanking down. Edric saw that Halvard still swung the mighty hammer—saw a Jomsviking, a round-faced Vend, tumble with crushed helm and spilling brains. He shouted encouragement as he brought up his band.

That settled the business. A few minutes of weapon-work, of hacking and battering, and suddenly the Jomsbourg men scattered. They went stumbling down the steps, made off across the open ground.

The Norsemen went after them—all but Edric. "Torgny!" he challenged. "Where are you, Raven Feeder? Meet me, shield to shield!"

The Danish chief was not among the fallen, nor with the fleeing. A moment ago he had stood planted in the doorway, blocking it against all comers. Now he was gone.

Edric ran into the church—a cavernous place of wreck and ruin, of broken ornaments and plundered shrines. Just inside he stepped over a body; a frail thing, its gray robe torn, stained.

Anger boiled up in him. "Woman-slayer!" he accused.

Torgny was there, at bay before the ravished altar, a towering bulk in dented helm and hacked *brynie*. His shield was crisscrossed with cuts, the edge notched. His sword was nicked raggedly.

"I slay men too!" The Jomsbourger spat foam from black-bearded lips. "You fair-weather Viking! You farmer! I'll kill one more!"

"You'll feed the ravens one more meal," Edric mocked. "When they pick your bones!"

He thrust at the corded throat that showed between two braids of beard. Torgny's shield came up, and his sword-point bit into it.

Wrenching the weapon free, he stooped under a glancing blow; it made his iron cap ring. A second stroke thudded on his shield. The tough oak split and fell from his arm.

Edric leaped back, stooping again. His left hand closed on a heavy silver candlestick, a bit of forgotten booty.

He rose and hurled it. The candlestick whirled at Torgny, end over end. The Jomsbourger laughed jeeringly, lifting his shield to catch it. And Edric's sword flashed out like blue lightning!

Under the shield and into that bare bull-throat. . . .

Picking his way down the littered, slippery steps, Edric looked around to see how things were going.

Well enough! His carls were straggling back from the chase. "Only a handful got away," Kar the Fish reported, "into the forest. No doubt the English will gather and hunt them down."

It came into Edric's mind that the Saxon hermit had foretold truly. Many men had died. But most of the dead were foes; and the prophet had said nothing of the plunder that lay scattered everywhere!

He was surprised to find the girl Froda beside him. He had almost forgotten her in the press of business.

Her eyes shone blue; her face was flushed and happy. "Come!" she smiled. "Mother Eadgytha wishes to thank you."

Some of the nuns were binding wounded Norsemen, using strips torn from their gray gowns. Others knelt with clasped hands. One stood straight and tall, a woman with calm eyes and a strong old face.

"Heathen man," she said, "you serve false gods, yet today you have wrought in a better service."

Something happened to Edric—a strange thing! He felt his forehead and hard cheeks burning, felt fire in his mailed breast. Was it painful or pleasant? He didn't know. He only knew that he could not rob these Holy Women. He must deserve their thanks.

His carls were pawing over the loot left by the Jomsvikings, and he shouted at them: "Drop the stuff! Take nothing! We have done a manly deed. Let us still be manly!"

"Can we give no gift?" the woman asked. "Beyond our prayers?"

He looked at Froda, and was almost dazzled by her smile. "This girl," he answered gruffly. "She wants to go home."

Froda clapped her hands. "I must go, Mother! Do not grieve."

Mother Eadgytha bowed her head. "Is there nothing else?"

"One thing!" Edric remembered. "We'd like a pall-cloth! There's a fine big one in the kirk—the Danes failed to reach it."

The nuns hurried to bring out the cloth, spreading it for the Norsemen to admire. A great piece of blue linen with a winged figure worked in yellow wool. . . . The Angel Gabriel, they said.

"What is an angel?" Halvard wondered. "You must mean Angle. At any rate, he's a hardy dreng—blowing a war horn!"

"Good magic in those wings," Gaut declared. "They'll make our ship fly faster!"

Now Mother Eadgytha was speaking again, speaking to all of them. "Kneel down! Heathen as you are, I will bless you."

The Norsemen could not understand. They stood gaping.

Until Edric barked: "Kneel, as she says! A Christian curse didn't harm us much. Will a Christian blessing hurt?"

Awkwardly, grinning or grumbling, the shaggy-bearded fellows sank on their knees. The Holy Woman raised both hands above them.

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Very Cold *for*

SHE HAD KNOWN MANY PROMINENT MEN—SOME OF THEM VERY WELL INDEED; AND THREE STRANGE MURDERS FOLLOWED THE ANNOUNCEMENT THAT HER DIARY WAS TO BE PUBLISHED. . . . A COMPLETE BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL.

JAKE HARRISON PICKED UP HIS HAT AND COAT from the cloakroom attendant and was walking across the lobby of the Saxon Club when he heard his name called. He turned as a page hurried to his side.

"Call for you, Mr. Harrison—a Mr. Nable."

Jake hesitated, and in that fraction of time a good deal of his amiability departed. Finally, he said, "Okay, thanks," and went over to the bank of phones beside the elevator.

The club operator asked him to wait a moment; then he heard a click as the connection was made. Then Gary Nable's voice blasted into his ear.

"Jake? How soon can you get down to the office? I wouldn't bother you if it wasn't important."

"Oh, sure. Look, I've an eight-o'clock date with Sheila at Dave's. What's up?"

"I'm sorry about lousing up your plans," Nable said, with somewhat too much solicitude. "But listen: Riorden, Dan Riorden, called awhile ago and wants to see me tonight. He wants us to handle his public relations. You know this is the biggest thing that ever happened to me, Jake. Riorden owns mills, mines, factories—"

"Yes, I know," Jake said. Nable's enthusiasm was working insidiously, and he began, almost against his will, to fish up the things he knew about Dan Riorden:

War contractor—genius of production. Free enterprise—know-how—money. Remarried after first wife's death—to entertainer, show girl, something like that. Son in Air Force. Good war record.

"What's his trouble?" he asked.

"Well, we didn't go into the details, but the Hampstead Committee wants a look at his books. You know what that usually means."

"He'll need a lot of help, then."

"You've got to get over here," Nable said.

"Okay. I can make it in fifteen or twenty minutes."

"One other thing, Jake." Nable sounded both cautious and puzzled. "He mentioned May—May Laval. Said something about her being in a spot to hurt him. Asked me if I knew her, and so forth."

Jake said: "That fits in with the rumors, doesn't it?"

"You mean about that book she's planning—the exposé on high living during the war?"

"Sounds logical," Jake said. "I'll get over as quickly as I can."

He hung up, then called another number. A moment later a quiet voice said: "Dave's Radio Bar."

"Dave, this is Jake. I'd like you to do me a favor. Sheila and I planned to meet at your place at eight. But I'm tied up now, and—"

"You want me to tell her you'll be along soon?"

Jake smiled. "I couldn't have put it more neatly myself."

"Well, I'll tell her; but this kind of stuff is why she left you in the first place. She's nobody to push around like a call girl."

"You're right, Dave," Jake said. "But take care of her, will you?"

He put the phone down and shrugged. That was the best he could do for the moment. Sheila would probably understand.

Waiting at the curb in the light snow while the doorman signaled a cruising cab, Jake thought about the news he'd got from Gary Nable, and a small frown touched his face. He was a slender, gracefully built man in his late thirties, with graying hair and lean features saved from austerity by a normal expression of good humor.

But he wasn't looking particularly good-humored as he climbed into the cab and gave directions to the driver. He was thinking of what Nable had told him about May Laval. Except for that, the Riorden account would be a routine chore. The element of May in the equation, however, made everything else unstable.

He had known May Laval quite a few years. Ten, at least, he thought. She was about his own age, thirty-eight. The facts about May were not too mysterious. She had come from California to Chicago as a girl of nineteen, a very beautiful girl with golden hair and large candid eyes that had surveyed everything in the city with delighted astonishment.

She had got into a few shows on the merits of her beauty, which was real and fresh, and after her third show closed, had surprised quite a few people by marrying its backer, an elderly meat-packer. The marriage hadn't lasted long, and May had come out of it on the way to being a wealthy woman. She had proved then that there was something behind her big blue eyes, by investing her money shrewdly in real estate that doubled in value within a few years. Jake had met her about that time, which was shortly after her second marriage to an orchestra leader had turned out badly. He had liked her, and they became firm but casual friends.

May's talent as news copy always astounded Jake, who was doing features for the *Express* at the time. She had a flair, or rather a passion, for weird and dizzy escapades. Her antics could range from a nocturnal bathing party in Chicago's Buckingham Fountain, to the successful bidding for a Poe first edition that every bibliophile in the country had wanted. She had color.

MAY became known over those years as a character's character. Her plushy Victorian home on Astor Street was crowded with politicians, judges, gamblers, newspaper men and, for variety, there might be a handful of derelicts picked up personally by her from West Side souplines. May knew everybody; everybody knew May.

During the war she reached her zenith as a colorful personality. She was unofficial hostess to the important men who came to Chicago to buy and sell properties in seven figures, a Girl Friday to the men fighting the war of priorities, allocations, contracts and logistics.

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May

by WILLIAM McGIVERN

Illustrated by
JAMES ERNST

"The X could mean that the murderer was referring to a double-cross. Too pat, I think."

The end of the war seemed to bring May's era of curious importance to a close. The press was slightly weary of her, and there was competition from returning GI's, from strikes, readjustment, and the other agonies of peace. The days passed when May's name could be found in three or four columns in every edition of every paper in town.

Jake realized that he had hardly seen May since the end of the war. She had made a few sporadic attempts to recapture the attention that had always been part of her life, and then she'd gone to Sun Valley.

That had been all, until the rumor of her book began to float around. According to the vague reports, the book would be one to end all books on the war. It was to be an exposé, based on her diaries, with names, dates and telephone numbers, of amours and chicanery on the highest of levels. It was to be Madame Récamier telling all.

Jake tossed his cigarette out the cab window. He couldn't help but be amused with May's latest brain storm, even though it was likely to embarrass their prospective client, Dan Riorden.

Jake liked May. He knew that the stories about her, both the good and bad, were exaggerated wildly. The truth was that May was born to be looked at, to be admired, to be discussed and speculated about, and unless all this was happening at the same time, May was apt to be miserable.

Jake gave up his reflections as the cab drew to a stop before the Etruria Building. He had no idea what May's interference might mean to the Riorden account. But it was a safe guess that things would be exciting.

Chapter Two

AT THE THIRTY-FOURTH FLOOR JAKE STEPPED from the elevator floor and walked briskly toward the solid glass portals which bore the inscription: GARY NABLE AND ASSOCIATES, *Public Relations.*

The reception-room was dark, but upon entering the long, paneled hallway that led past the art and fashion departments, Jake could see light coming through the half-open door of Nable's office, at the end of the corridor. Voices and laughter resounded.

Jake walked down the dark hallway and, after rapping on the half-open door, stepped into Nable's office. He saw two men and a woman with drinks in their hands, and Gary Nable, who was working behind the bottle-

cluttered bar normally hidden by a sliding section of the mahogany-paneled walls.

"Well, there you are," Nable said heartily. Gary Nable was not impressive physically, but his energy and enthusiasm were as overwhelming as a tidal wave. He was short, bulky, and fiftyish, with effectively disarranged white hair, and eyes that were startlingly blue against his darkly tanned skin. Gripping Jake's arm, he pulled him toward the center of the office. "Jake," he said, "I want you to meet the Riordens."

The tall, powerfully built man standing at Nable's desk, Jake recognized as Dan Riorden, clubman, industrialist and tycoon. Now Riorden looked tired and anxious; his thick black hair needed combing, and his hard, strangely pale face was lined with worry. Standing together at the windows were a slender brunette, and a sandy-haired young man in a dinner jacket. They had been studying the world globe which, for some reason, Nable considered necessary to his office.

"Our senior account executive, Jake Harrison," Nable said.

Riorden shook Jake's hand with a quick, powerful grip, and smiled briefly. He seemed to be controlling his nerves, or his patience, with difficulty.

Nable led Jake to the couple at the window and made the introductions. The lady was Denise, Mrs. Riorden. The young man was Riorden's son Brian.

Denise Riorden murmured something and smiled at Jake. She was attractive in a smooth, polished fashion, and nearing forty, but her deeply tanned skin and slim figure made her appear younger. Underneath her excellently styled black faille suit, her body had the relaxed suppleness of a dancer, and her bare legs were evenly tanned and beautifully shaped.

Brian Riorden was tall, thin, with sandy hair and light gray eyes. He was in the process of getting drunk.

He beamed at Jake good-naturedly. "Now, I suppose we'll have to get down to business. Probably means the drinking is over."

"Not on your life," Nable said cheerily. "Let me fix that glass of yours. There are some things more important than business, damn it."

Dan Riorden cleared his throat, and said, "I think we'd better talk about business, Nable." He added dryly, "I hate to spoil the party, but I'm rushed for time."

"Right," Nable said. "Let's pitch right in."

Denise Riorden walked to the brown leather sofa that extended along one wall and sat down, crossing her legs. Brian took a seat in a chair on the other side of the room and yawned comfortably.

"City air gets me," he said, to no one in particular.

Nable was refilling glasses, so Jake said, "You don't live in town, then?"

"No. I live in Wisconsin, at Dad's lodge. I come into Chicago once every week or so to get sociably drunk."

Denise glanced at Riorden, who was leaning against Nable's desk, and frowning at the floor, obviously not listening to the conversation. "When do I get to see the lodge?" she asked him, smiling. "I've seen the patio in Palm Springs, the hut in the Everglades, but no lodge."

Riorden glanced at her, and his face cleared as he smiled. "It's not a very exciting place. Perhaps Brian will have us up some week-end if you're curious."

"Delighted," Brian said.

Nable distributed the filled glasses. Riorden took a sip from his drink, then faced Nable, his feet spread wide apart and his shoulders squared.

"Here it is," he said: "Last week the manager of my Washington office called me, and told me that the Hampstead Committee had come across some deals of ours that they wanted explained. Two days later they sent a preliminary investigating team to Chicago headed by a fellow named Gregory Prior. He is in town now, and has sealed my books and is getting ready to go through them with a fine-tooth comb. When he completes that end of the investigation, he'll report to Washington, and if they think they have a case against me, I'll be called before the committee for a hearing."

Nable had been nodding sympathetically. He said: "The Government has a mania for investigating people. However, what's Prior likely to find when he looks into your books?"

"He'll find I cut corners," Riorden said. "Hell, the Nazis and the Japs were cutting corners, weren't they?" He tapped a thick blunt forefinger into the palm of his hand. "Here was the situation I faced: I had a contract to make gun-barrels for the U. S. Army, and our boys needed those barrels bad. This was the winter of 1944, remember. Rundstedt had driven a wedge between our troops in the Ardennes, and Goebbels was shouting that they'd have Antwerp by Christmas, Paris by the first of the year. Things were bad. I couldn't beg or borrow the quality of steel that was specified in my contract, so I went ahead and made gun-barrels with a cheaper grade of steel. I made the barrels, by God, and they were a damn' sight better than no barrels at all."

Brian Riorden opened his eyes and smiled at his father. "You've got an interesting point there," he said. "I wonder if some GI who got blown up with one of those barrels would agree with you that they were better than none at all?"

Riorden turned on his son with a bull-like twist of his shoulders. "There is no proof my gun-barrels blew up," he said, in a hard, precise voice.

"Well, somebody's did," Brian said, yawning.

Riorden took a handkerchief from his pocket and dabbed at his forehead. "Yes, there were cases of premature detonation, and of gun-barrels cracking after heavy use. They happened in ordnance testing-grounds. too, under ideal circumstances, and with guns made to exact specifications. But that isn't the point. I made barrels when they were needed overseas, and the only crime I committed was in violating the letter of a Government contract, which was stupid and unreasonable in the first place."

"Hear, hear!" Brian murmured.

Riorden ignored him and continued talking. "Now, Nable, I don't want to be pilloried in the newspapers by this damned committee. Senator Hampstead is an ignorant, suspicious hillbilly who hates the thought that any man in the world has an extra pair of shoes or a second dime in his pocket. He's a sour neurotic who thinks he's God Almighty. I want you to get my story across to the papers, and see that they treat me right. Can you do that?"

"Well," Nable said, expansively, "I don't see any difficulty so far. You acted in a sensible manner, and it shouldn't be too hard to get that fact over to the public. However, I do think we should have a few more facts at our disposal."

"All right," Riorden said. "I'm no good at details, but I'll send my executive secretary, Avery Meed, over tomorrow morning with all the dope on the deals the Government is worrying about. That okay?"

Brian Riorden got languidly to his feet and walked toward the door, yawning. "I'm going to run along, I think," he said. He opened the door, a smile on his face. "I sympathize with you two gentlemen, you know," he said. "You've got a tough job. You're supposed to put my father's wartime activities in a rosy light. Well, maybe I can help you." He paused and glanced at his father. "The old man, in a sentence, is a liar, a thief, and a murderer."

"Brian!" Riorden snapped. "I want no more of that talk!" he said—but underneath the hard surface of his voice Jake sensed a note of defeat; and he had the feeling

that this was not the first time that Riorden and his son had been through this thing.

Brian seemed undisturbed by his father's reaction. He said to Nable, "He's sensitive, too. You'll have to handle him carefully." With a mock salute at his father he walked out of the room.

Riorden jammed both hands in the side pocket of his coat and was staring at the rug with a bitter frown on his face. Denise came quickly to his side. She said gently: "Don't you worry about him, Danny Boy. You know he's been upset since the war."

"Brian had a hard time in the war," Riorden said, a defensive tone in his voice. "He—he's not to be blamed for his attitude. He had a tough time, and now he's having trouble settling down."

"That's childish," Denise said. "He had it tough, but so did a million other guys."

Riorden said slowly: "I don't think it's fair of us to criticize him for not behaving as we'd like him to. Now, let's get back to our work."

THERE was a knock on the door and Dean Niccolo, the agent's top copywriter, walked in. He nodded to Nable, and said: "Sorry if I'm late, Gary."

"Not at all," Nable said, obviously relieved by the interruption. He introduced Niccolo to Riorden and his wife. "I asked Dean to come in tonight after you called, Mr. Riorden. He'll be working on the copy we turn out for you, so I wanted him briefed from the start."

Dean Niccolo nodded to the Riordens and smiled at Jake. "Funny thing," he said, getting out cigarettes. "I met a young crackpot getting on the elevator." Niccolo laughed, failing to notice Nable's desperately signaling eyes. "He was carrying quite a load. He saluted me, said, '4-F, I presume,' and staggered into the elevator."

Riorden made an impatient gesture with his hand. "That young idiot, Mr. Niccolo, was my son. Don't bother saying you're sorry. He's drunk tonight, and acting like a damn' fool. Now, we've had enough interruptions. Nable, I'd like some details on what you can do for me before I sign the contract."

Niccolo sat down and winked quickly at Jake, as Nable began talking. He was a large young man, with broad shoulders and blunt strong hands. His hair was black and thick, worn in a trim crew cut. There was intelligence in his dark features, stubborn strength in his jaw.

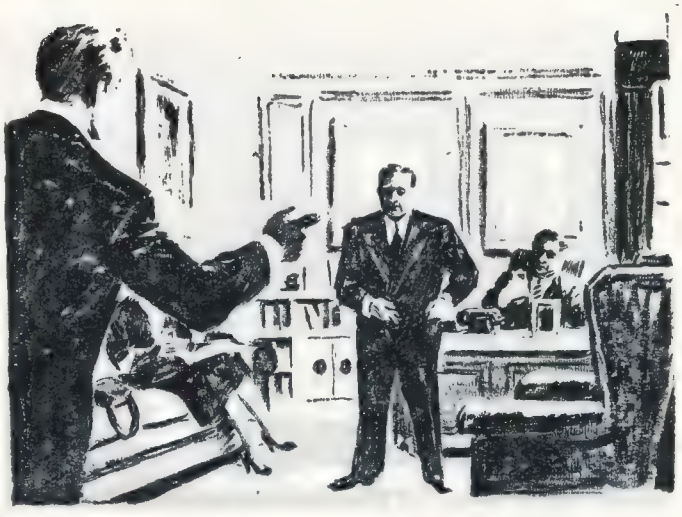
Nable was saying: "Naturally, we can't give you a detailed program as yet, Mr. Riorden, but when we know the facts, you can rest assured—"

"I can't rest assured until I know what you're going to do," Riorden said, with a touch of temper. "Can't you give me an idea in plain words? I like things put out clearly, where I can examine them without using a dictionary."

Nable flashed a distress signal at Jake and said: "Jake, perhaps you can give Mr. Riorden a fill-in on our plans."

"Okay," Jake said. He had been studying Riorden, and he guessed the man could stand honesty. "Frankly, I don't know what we can do for you, because I don't have any facts. After we talk with your man Meed, tomorrow, we may know enough to make plans. There's nothing mysterious about public relations. The techniques of the business are fundamental, but each account requires a specific application of those techniques. Part of your problem, of course, is Senator Hampstead. He's remorseless, ruthless, full of joyless reform ideas, but the country is in back of him, after the job he's done on five-per-centers, contract jockeys, and some of the other termites that did business during the war. His committee has standing and character. And the fact that he's teeing off on you may look bad at first. That's why I repeat, we need all the facts before we attempt to set up a program."

Riorden nodded reluctantly, and said: "All right. But I'll want a report by tomorrow night, after you've talked to Meed. And there's one other thing. I asked you about May Laval, Nable. She's writing a book, I'm told. There's a chance she may drag me into it. Right now with this investigation pending, she can do a lot of harm."



"The old man is a thief and a murderer."

"Are you sure she's using you in the book?" Jake said.

"No, I'm not. That's what I'm expecting you to find out, for one thing."

Jake nodded and thought a moment. Then he said: "I know her fairly well, Riorden. I'll talk to her and see what's on her mind."

"This May Laval intrigues me," Denise said coolly. "She seems to have you men upset. What sort of a person is she?"

Riorden ran a hand through his black hair, then shook his head. "Hell, it's not that easy. She can be wonderful. And she can be a hellion. I knew her during the war. She helped me a lot, entertaining Army and Navy brass, Government inspectors, and so forth. May was great at that. And she was cheerful and fun to be with, until she'd get burned up about something; then she'd let loose at anyone in sight." Riorden shook his head and smiled slightly. Jake watched Denise, and saw the tightness that came to her mouth.

Riorden looked at her, then cleared his throat. "Well, it's beside the point, anyway. You'll see her then, Jake?"

"Sure. It's probably nothing to worry about."

Riorden studied Jake thoughtfully. Then he said: "Remember this, Harrison. I worry about everything. I don't take chances on things turning out all right. I make damn' sure they do. Do you understand what I mean?"

"I worry from ten till five, myself," Jake said easily. "But I see what you mean."

"Okay, then let's not assume that May is harmless. If she's intending to take a crack at me, I'll make sure she changes her mind."

Riorden nodded good night then and Nable escorted him and Denise to the elevator. Jake made himself a drink and grinned at Niccolo. "You can take your foot out of your mouth now," he said.

"How was I to know the damned idiot was Riorden's son?" Niccolo said, good-naturedly.

Nable came back and glared at Niccolo. "You might have ruined everything," he said, "but maybe it doesn't matter, the old man took it pretty well. Let's forget it and get down to work. Any ideas, Jake?"

"We don't have anything to go on yet," Jake said. "I'll get on it tomorrow. Now I'm going to try to find Sheila."

"What do you think about May?" Nable asked, as Jake went to the door.

"Hard to say," Jake shrugged. "I want to talk with her first. However, I'd make a guess and say she's liable to work herself into a nasty corner if she goes ahead with her book."

He waved good-by to Niccolo and walked down to the elevators.

Chapter Three

FROM THE ETRURIA BUILDING JAKE CROSSED the boulevard to Dave's Radio Bar. Inside it was warm, noisy, and crowded but there was no sign of Sheila.

Dave came to meet him, a disapproving frown on his face. "She left for home about an hour ago," he said.

"Did she seem annoyed?"

"Oh, no," Dave said. "She liked sitting here alone and being wolfed at by a lot of characters."

"Okay, I'm a cad," Jake said, and walked back to the phone booth. He dropped a nickel, intending to call her but then changed his mind and dialed another number. The voice that answered was intimate in a brash, challenging manner.

"May?" Jake said. "This is Jake."

May was having a party, as Jake had already guessed from the sounds in the background. She insisted he come over immediately. Jake promised to be there in half an hour.

Leaving Dave's, he took a cab to the near North Side apartment where Sheila had moved after their divorce. He rang her bell, and when the buzzer sounded went up the stairs.

Sheila met him on the landing. He had a good view of her slim legs as he ascended the last flight; but he noticed that one smartly shod foot was tapping significantly.

"This is no time to be unreasonable and female," he said. "Nable caught me before I got away from the Club."

"You say 'Nable' as if he and God were interchangeable ideas," Sheila said dryly. "But come in."

Jake put his hat and coat on the back of a chair and joined her on the low couch before the fireplace. There were fresh flowers in a squat copper vase on the coffee table, and the shelves flanking the fireplace were lined with well-used books. Several vivid modern paintings brightened the flat gray walls.

"Want a drink?" Sheila said.

Jake raised his eyebrows. "Your tone lacks cordiality. You're not pouting, I hope."

Sheila smiled. "I don't feel cordial, but I'm not pouting. Whisky and soda okay?"

"Fine."

Sheila made two drinks in the kitchen and brought them to the coffee table. There was an unconscious grace in her movements that Jake enjoyed watching. She was slim, with dark hair which she wore in a page-boy, and gray, candid eyes. She had an easy elegance in her manner, and good-humored intelligence in her features.

She sat down and tucked her feet under her, while Jake sipped his drink and relaxed.

"What was on Nable's mind?" she said.

"A new account, Dan Riorden, the wheel, is in trouble. You know about him, I suppose. Anyway, he obviously made some bad gun-barrels, and is going to need a break in the papers. The Government is looking into his contracts."

Sheila lit a cigarette. "And you're handling the account. Does that make you feel warm and cozy inside?"

"It doesn't make me feel anything in particular," Jake said. "Lawyers defend criminals, don't they? We're merely defending Riorden from an unfavorable treatment in the press."

"The analogy stinks."

"So it does," Jake grinned. "But let's talk about something serious. We still have a date, and there's plenty of time. How about going to Dave's?"

"All right. Let's get out before Nable whistles for you again."

Jake got into his coat while Sheila went into the bedroom to freshen her make-up; and when she came out, Jake saw that her mood had changed. She struck a pose and said, "Let's be gay and mad. *Mad!*"

Jake smiled pensively. "Why you left me I'll never know. We always had fun, didn't we?"

"Yes, but you drank too much," Sheila said. "Also you pulled too many deals like tonight."

"That's ridiculous," Jake said irritably.

"Not at all," Sheila smiled. "I wanted to be a wife, but you wanted a drinking companion."

"Good God," Jake said. "You sound like some creature who's just been dragged to civilization from darkest suburbia."

"Also, I never got adjusted to your working for a fraud like Gary Nable," Sheila said.

"Dear, you're beginning to rave. You work for Gary too, remember."

"I handle an honest account, the only one he's got, I could add."

Jake shook his head as he followed her down the stairs. "I may be insensitive, but what is so wrong with Gary? He's a public-relations man, and he's a fathead, and he has a dull, acquisitive attitude about money, but outside of that he's not too bad."

"Well, let's not quibble about it," Sheila said. "You asked me why I wanted a divorce, and I told you."

OUTSIDE they walked the half-block to Lake Shore Drive to catch a Loop-bound cab. The air was cleanly cold and sharp breeze was coming off the lake.

Sheila moved close to him and hugged his arm. "I'm in the mood for Dave's," she said. "It's a perfect night for a warm, mellow bar."

"Oh, damn," Jake said, and tried to sound surprised. "I just remembered. We've got to make a stop. You know May Laval?"

"I've avoided her at a few parties." She let go his arm. "You just remembered, eh?"

Jake waved to a cab. "Word of honor, this won't take a minute."

They climbed into the cab, and he gave the driver May's address. He turned to Sheila, but she was gazing with pointed absorption at the lake.

"Now, is this an adult reaction?" Jake demanded.

"What's so wonderful about adult reactions? We had a date, remember?" She looked at him coldly. "First you stand me up for Gary Nable, and now you're dragging me to May Laval's like a piece of baggage. What sort of reaction, adult or otherwise, do you expect?"

"Do you think I enjoy these things?" Jake demanded.

"Of course you do. That's one of the reasons our marriage never grew into a rose-covered institution. What do you have to see May Laval about?"

"May knew Riorden during the war. She kept a diary during that time which she now intends to make into a book. Riorden is afraid she's going to tee off on him; and that, plus a Senatorial investigation, is just too much of a bad thing."

"This is getting lovelier by the minute," Sheila said.

"Oh, come off it," Jake said. "May's only trouble is that she's too adjusted. She's living exactly as all you conventional harpies would like to live, so you treat her like a leper."

Their cab stopped before a two-story brownstone house in the old-fashioned but eminently respectable Astor Street neighborhood. Climbing out, Jake saw lights shining through the drawn curtains of the wide bay win-

dows, and heard loud, excellent jazz coming from the first floor.

"Just a few of the girls in for a sewing bee," Sheila said dryly, as they went up the steps.

Chapter Four

THE WIDE, POLISHED DOOR WAS OPENED BY A maid in a frilly black-and-white uniform, who led them through a dim foyer to the arched entrance of the long, elegant parlor. The room was decorated in a rococo modern Victorian manner, with oval mirrors in chalk-white frames hanging against the flat green walls, and white china lamps with fat roses shining palely in the design. Underneath the bay windows at the end of the room was a great curved divan, covered tightly in green striped satin, and before it, a vase of roses rested on a low coffee table.

There were perhaps thirty people in the room, and their high-pitched conversation and laughter mingled quite well with the jazz that poured from the black lacquered player. The women present were slim and expensive-looking, and the men were precisely the sort who could afford them.

Jake noticed a couple of municipal judges, a State senator, and an assortment of gamblers, writers, and racketeers, chief of which latter group was the amiable and gracious Mike Locarno who operated some of the city's brothels and handbooks.

Sheila glanced down at her simple dark suit, and nudged Jake sharply. "You double-dyed villain!"

"You look wonderful. Colorless and self-effacing. People will think you're my cousin from What Cheer, Iowa."

Jake saw May then, seated cross-legged on a window seat and laughing with a hard-faced jockey and a gray-haired man Jake didn't know.

Sheila saw her too, and murmured: "Lovely, unaffected child, isn't she?"

Jake grinned. May was wearing a blue peasant skirt with a white blouse and ballet slippers, and her fabulous golden hair was worn long in Alice-in-Wonderland style.

"All she needs is a gay little parasol," Sheila said.

"Oh, come off it. She's an artist at her business. Notice how overdressed everybody else looks?"

"As dear, sweet May knew they would."

May saw them standing in the archway then, and waved a greeting. She stood up with a flash of bare legs, and skipped across to them.

"Jake," she said. "How wonderful!" Putting a hand on Sheila's arm, in what seemed an afterthought, she said: "And you too, Sheila. Jake didn't say he was bringing you."

"No, he kept it a secret," Sheila said. "I wasn't in on it till we got into the cab. . . . Excuse me, please. I see an old friend."

Alone with May, Jake said, "I'd like to talk to you a minute in private. Okay?"

"This sounds exciting. Are you, at long last, going to make a pass at me?"

"No, this is important," he said, and smiled at the involuntary annoyance that showed in her face.

"All right," May said. "I'll see that everyone has drinks, and we'll sneak up to the den of horror."

She moved away and Jake watched her, thinking that for all her good sense and humor she'd never been able to appreciate the fact that there might be men in the world who were not longing for her desperately.

Jake nodded to several people he knew, and tried unsuccessfully to fend off an intense young man who wrote daytime radio serials.

Jake nodded absently to his remarks, and glanced over to the divan where Sheila was sitting with a successful young magazine illustrator. The illustrator was talking animatedly, and it was obvious that he was delighted with Sheila.

Jake frowned and sipped his drink. His marriage with Sheila hadn't worked. Sheila had called it off good-naturedly after two years that had seemed exceptionally pleasant to Jake.

They were still married, technically. Sheila had not yet filed for a divorce. But that was just a matter of time. Jake still didn't know what had been wrong. But he couldn't see that the break had been all his fault.

Jake saw with relief that May was coming toward him, but sighed as she was intercepted by Mike Locarno.

MIKE was a small, thickly built man with curly gray hair and mild, twinkling blue eyes. His skin was deeply tanned and wrinkled, and when he smiled his face wreathed into a surprising criss-cross of lines and creases. He smiled a lot, and was unfailingly gentle and amiable in manner, even when forced by the demands of his profession to drop a cement-coated competitor into the Chicago River.

"We have not seen each other in much too long a time," Mike was saying.

"Well, whose fault is that?" May said.

"Ah, my fault," Mike said, with an apologetic little bob of his head. "Today I lead a quiet, simple life out on my farm. I grow vegetables like my father did in Sicily, and my back has an ache in it that is very good. I dig in the ground, and drink a little wine, and go to bed early. It is very nice."

"You sound like a bad story in the Saroyan manner," May said. "All this digging in the good clean earth, and drinking the clear red *vino,* and everything being so damn' good. Really, Mike, it's ghastly."

Mike smiled without understanding. "I think you are not being very nice to an old man," he said.

"I'm a wretch, Mike. But I'm going to square myself with you when I write my book."

Mike continued to smile, but the warm, mobile good humor in his blunt brown features had disappeared. "Ah, I heard of this book, May. You will write about me, eh?"

"Mike, you're my star character. Everybody is dying to get the inside story on you."

"We had fun in the old days, eh, May? We talked a lot together, and no secrets between us, eh? Plenty of wine, plenty of talk. Maybe a little too much of both, I think."

"Are you trying in your tactful fashion to tell me something?" May said, laughing.

"Only this, because we are friends. Write your book, but don't hurt your old friends. I am not one to go around saying *woof! woof!* to people. But I must ask you, please, to forget some of our talk, eh?"

"Okay, I'll forget some of it," May grinned. "But not all of it, Mike: Now you'll have to excuse me."

Turning quickly from him she waved at Jake. "Come on—I'm ready, lover."

Jake nodded to Mike, whom he'd known for many years, and followed May through the archway and up the stairs to the second floor.

Reaching the landing Jake looked back down and saw Mike Locarno getting slowly into his coat in the foyer. The old man was alone, and there was a distressed, thoughtful expression on his face. Jake was thinking as he followed May into her bedroom that he would not like to be the cause of that particular expression on Mike Locarno's face.

"DON'T you like the Walden simplicity I've created up here?" May asked.

Glancing around, Jake grinned. The high-ceilinged bedroom faced east, but thick pink drapes were pulled

together now shutting off the view of the park and the lake. White fur rugs were scattered about the polished floor, and the immense four-poster bed, covered with fat pink pillows, stood imposingly in the middle of the room. The light was soft, and there was a fireplace and bookshelves.

"You need a couple of blackamoors with ostrich fans," Jake said. "Outside of that you didn't miss a trick."

"It's cozy," May smiled.

"The very word for it," Jake lit a cigarette. "I managed to eavesdrop on your conversation with Locarno. Sounded grim. What's up?"

"Oh, nothing at all," May said. "Now, what's on your mind?"

"I hear you're writing a book."

"Ah, fame!" May said, and smiled at the ceiling.

"My interest, as usual, is completely selfish. Dan Riorden has hired us to handle his press relations. He's worried about your book."

"He's got no reason to worry. Unless his heart isn't pure."

"He's got reason to worry then, I suppose."

"Jake, Riorden is somewhat of a bad-actor. I'm a little surprised that you're mixed up with him."

Jake smiled. "You're out of character. Let's go back a bit. Do you have anything on Riorden?"

"Assuming I have—what then?"

"Are you going to use it?"

"I will if it adds to the story."

Jake shook his head. "I don't get it, frankly. You're going out of your way to stick your chin out. I yield to no one in my admiration for good, clean fun, but irritating men like Mike Locarno and Dan Riorden comes under another heading. Why are you doing it?"

"The usual shoddy reasons," May said coolly. "Money, prestige, and so forth. You're being a bore, Jake."

"Okay. Tell me something about the book, then."

May smiled dreamily. "Jake, it's going to be a classic. It will be autobiography in the grand French manner." She widened her eyes innocently, and said: "That's why I can't be too concerned with the personal feelings of the people involved, even if one of them happens to be your client."

Jake grinned at her. "Don't give me that 'grand French tradition' business. I knew you when you thought Hemingway played third for the Cubs."

May laughed good-naturedly. "You're the one person I can't impress."

"Where and how did you get the information on people like Riorden?"

May sat up, and lifted a foot-square, black-lacquered box from the coffee table. She opened it and removed a thick, leather-bound book. "Here's where the bodies are buried."

"Well, well! The good, old-fashioned diary with all the shoddy dope. I haven't seen one since I stopped covering murders. They're awfully old hat now."

"Oh, this one just covers the war years. I've gone modern since then. Anyway, I have all the little tidbits I need right here."

"Well, good luck," Jake sighed. He saw no point in talking with her now. Perhaps later he could point out to her that she was making a mistake, at least, he thought cynically, so far as Riorden was concerned.

May put the diary away and went downstairs, where she was reclaimed by the jockey, who led her aggressively to the bar.

They made a comical picture. The jockey was two inches shorter than May, but his body was like something made of leather and wire. May's Alice-in-Wonderland hair, and her absurdly simple clothes, made her look like a cheerful, innocent child walking with the toughest boy in the neighborhood.

For some reason no one seemed amused by May at the moment, and in the strange silence that followed her entrance, Jake noticed definite tension in the room.

It was fear, he realized with a start—fear of May.

Sheila came over to him and asked if he was ready to leave. He said all right and started to tell her what he had noticed, but decided to keep still.

The knocker sounded as Jake helped her into her coat in the foyer. The maid hurried past them and opened the door.

Dan Riorden and Gary Nable walked in, and Gary did a double-take on seeing Jake. But he seemed pleased, and Jake guessed it was because it would indicate to Riorden that the agency was wasting no time.

Riorden nodded to Sheila as Jake made the introductions. Then he said, "Have you talked with May?"

"Yes."

Riorden said, "Did she mention me?"

"I did," Jake said. "She hinted that she might have something—" He paused, looking for a tactful word, then gave it up and said: "She's got something on you, or thinks she has, but we didn't get too specific."

Riorden took a long, deliberate breath, and then nodded jerkily at Sheila and strode toward the parlor.

"I'll stick with him," Nable said. "He called me after you left, said he wanted to see May tonight. He's a stubborn character."

"We were leaving, remember?" Sheila said.

They found a cab outside and started for Dave's.

"Why the frown?" Sheila said quietly, as Jake fumbled for cigarettes.

"May. She's drifting into trouble. And I'll be damned if I see why. I just can't figure it out."

He told her what he had learned from May, and they talked about it that night until Sheila yawned pointedly, and Jake changed the subject.

Chapter Five

Jake reached the office at ten the next morning. The receptionist said Nable wished to see him right away, so Jake walked down to his office. Nable was at the bar and looked unhappy. But he brightened when Jake came in.

"Care for a drink?" he said.

Jake said no and sat down beside Nable's desk. "What's up?"

"Well, the session with May last night accomplished very little." Nable brought the drink to his desk and sat down in his leather-backed swivel chair. "Damn that woman," he said in the voice one would use to curse the weather, or any other disagreeable but inevitable phenomenon. "She seemed to go out of her way to antagonize Riorden. I never pretended to understand her, but now, I don't think anyone can."

"What happened?"

Nable lit a cigarette and ran a hand through his rumpled white hair. "The bare facts won't give you an idea of the way it was. It was as if she were the only one there who wasn't afraid of something."

"I think I know what you mean. Go on."

"Riorden wasn't in a good mood, in the first place. He picked me up at the office and didn't talk on the way to May's. He barged into May's parlor and told her he wanted to talk with her."

Nable put out his cigarette, then lit another and frowned at the curling smoke. "I can't describe it very well," he said. "But the impression I got was that May was deliberately trying to be as tough as possible. He asked about her book, and she immediately expressed vast surprise that he cared about literature. Riorden knew he was being laughed at. But he stuck his ground.

He said he'd heard about the book and that he hoped she wasn't using anything which he'd told her in confidence."

"Was everybody at the party listening to this?"

"Hard to say. Neither of them raised their voices, but I suppose they could have been overheard if anyone bothered to listen. Anyway, May kept needling Riorden, but she did it in that good-humored, little-girl manner she affects at times. She asked him what he was worried about, and from her attitude you might think she really didn't know."

"Well, what *is* Riorden worried about?" Jake said. "This vague talk of exposés and so forth is unconvincing. Does May have something specific and damaging on him?"

"I don't know. He acts as if she did. Last night I got the impression he would enjoy strangling her, slowly and carefully."

"How did their talk end?"

"It didn't really end, in the sense that anything was settled. Riorden warned her not to use anything about him, said she'd be making a mistake. May pretended to believe he was referring to the artistic problems of selection, and so forth, and assured him she would be most careful in her choice of incidents. She told him very sweetly that biography in the de Sévigné manner was a form that required a blending of techniques at their highest level of effectiveness, and that any mistake she made would only be because she aspired too high. She laughed then and said he probably hadn't even the vaguest idea of what she was talking about, and added that this was not at all surprising, considering his *bourgeois* predilections."

"Nice sweet exit line," Jake said.

Nable shrugged and sipped his drink. "Riorden is mad as hell, Jake. He's going to be hard to handle."

"Let's not worry about that. Isn't his man due here this morning with some facts and figures?"

"I forgot. Riorden called this morning and said Avery Meed—that's his secretary—couldn't make it today, but will be here tomorrow morning. That gives us a day's grace."

The phone on Nable's desk buzzed. He lifted it, listened, then handed it to Jake. "For you."

Jake said: "Hello."

There was a pause. Then: "Jake, it's May. I have melodramatic news right out of a grade-B thriller. Someone tried to break into my little bagnio early this morning. Isn't that interesting?"

"That's nothing funny," Jake said.

"It's hardly tragic, however," May said. "What I called for was to see if you could have coffee with me this morning. I feel in the mood for you. How about it?"

"Sure, I'll come right over."

Jake hung up, glanced at Nable. "Someone tried to break into May's last night."

"She's a damn' idiot," Nable said shortly. "She'll get into trouble and make a mess for everyone. You know how the papers would love to latch onto her tie-up with Riorden? That would shoot our campaign sky-high."

"I'm going to have breakfast with her now," Jake said. "Maybe this is a good thing. It might frighten her into using her head."

Chapter Six

MAY MET HIM AT THE DOOR AND LED HIM TO her study which was on the first floor, facing the morning sun. It was a brisk room, done in white leather, and furnished with deep chairs, an enormous coffee table, and a desk piled high with books and manuscripts. A silver coffee service was on the office table, and the white Venetian blinds were drawn against the morning sun. The room was pleasantly dim.

May opened it. "Here's where the bodies are buried."

May wore a simple gray dress with gray suède shoes, and her heavy, shining hair was looped up into a low chignon. Her eyes were clear, and her skin was fresh and blooming. She looked like an enormously healthy and beautiful schoolteacher who bought her clothes in Paris.

She poured coffee, sitting beside Jake on the deep couch. A bar of sunlight struck her face and she put her hand up in a curious, defensive gesture. Jake saw then that she was tired; there were tiny lines at the corners of her eyes and mouth, and the illusion of her glowing youth was shaken for an instant. She stood up quickly and adjusted the blind. Then she sat down again on the couch beside Jake.

"I hate sunlight," she said, irritably.

"What about last night? I didn't rush over here to hear about your phobias."

May told the story simply. She had gone to bed at two o'clock, the maid having left. She stayed alone at night until the cleaning-woman, a Mrs. Swenson, came in at six in the morning, May explained digressively. Sometime after falling asleep she was awakened by a sound on the first floor. The time was three-fifteen. She came downstairs and snapped on the lights. There was no one in the house, but an attempt had been made to force a window at the side. A pane of glass had been broken. Her arrival probably scared off whoever had been trying to get in.

"Well, what do you think?" she asked, smiling. "White slavers, maybe?"

"Has it occurred to you that someone may be worried about this book you're planning?" Jake said.

"Oh, don't be ridiculous."

"Listen: I heard Mike Locarno talking last night, and I know he's not happy. Also Dan Riorden is stewing about your book. And there are probably others. So don't tell me I'm ridiculous."

"How do you know about Riorden?"

"Nable told me this morning. You weren't very nice to our client, I gather."

May laughed, and then lit a cigarette. "That was my sincerest hope," she said. "Jake, Riorden is a type I dislike. He's the perfect symbol of our society today, the insane blending of Geiger counters with animated commercials. He's a mixture of man and child, at home building a million-dollar plant, but equally in character smashing all the furniture with a hammer."

"I never suspected your flair for epigram," Jake said. "But the fact that Riorden conforms to our culture is no reason to crucify him."

"Do I have to have a reason for everything?" May said sharply. Standing, she walked to the window, her shoulders straight and angry.

Jake remembered that she had been annoyed last night when he'd pressed her about her reasons for writing the book.

"Turn around and stop sulking," he said. "I'm curious about why you're writing this book. You don't need money, and you aren't yearning for literary recognition. So what's left?"

May came back and sat beside him. She crossed her beautiful legs and leaned back comfortably, apparently in better spirits. "What difference does it make why I write the book?"

"None, I suppose," Jake said. "But I'm curious. You're going to hurt people, you're going to make enemies. Why go to all that trouble to become unpopular?"

"Embarrassing a collection of charlatans and frauds is no trouble," May said, grinning.

"They were your friends at one time."

"Such magnificent friends they were!" May said. She crushed out her cigarette and looked down at her hands. "Let's don't talk about it any more."

"Okay," Jake said.

The door opened as he was preparing to say good-by; the maid came in and said, "There's a man and woman to see you, Miss Laval—a Mr. and Mrs. Riorden."

"Well, well!" Jake said.

"Show them in," May said, grinning at Jake.

The maid reappeared a moment later and stepped aside at the doorway. Denise Riorden walked in, looking tanned and sure of herself in voluptuous mink, but the man with her wasn't Dan Riorden, it was his lean, sandy-haired son, Brian.

Brian grinned at Jake and walked over to shake hands. Jake introduced him and Denise to May.

"We were having coffee," May said. "Would you like something stronger, Mrs. Riorden?"

"No, thank you. I sometimes go all the way until the afternoon without a drink," Denise said.

Brian said: "I'll take a whisky and soda, if you don't mind." He put a hand to his forehead gingerly. "Last night was Homeric, in a sloppy sort of way."

Denise sat in a chair opposite the sofa, where bars of the clear morning sun highlighted the perfection of her furs. She was wearing a brown suit, with alligator pumps. There was a controlled, deliberate quality about her, Jake noticed, as she lighted a cigarette.

Finally she said: "Dan has told me a lot about you, Miss Laval."

May smiled gently as she poured coffee, and Jake decided she had already taken a round from Denise. Her simple gray suit and relaxed manner made Riorden's wife, for all her beauty, look like a burlesque queen.

"Dear Danny," May said. "So impulsive and—" She paused, considering a word. "So garrulous," she concluded. "What did he tell you about me?"

The maid brought Brian his drink, and he sipped it gratefully. "Fine," he said. "The old man told me about you, too," he said to May. "He had a great respect for your intelligence."

"I think 'shrewdness' was his word," Denise said, and blew smoke in the air.

"You mustn't give me too much credit," May said blandly. "Danny stands in awe of anyone who can read without moving his lips. But now that you've reminded me, Danny used to tell me about you, Denise. You were in show business or something, I believe."

"I was a dancer."

"Yes, I remember. Weren't you ever afraid of falling off the runway?" May said innocently.

Brian slapped his thigh and let out a delighted shout. "Wonderful, wonderful!" he said, beaming at Denise.

Denise looked at him without expression. She put out her cigarette with a hard vicious gesture, and turned to May. "I didn't come here to swap wisecracks," she said.

"You haven't, of course," May smiled. "But go on."

"Dan is worried over what you're going to write about him," Denise said, and now there were spots of angry color in her cheeks. "He didn't send me to see you, if that's what you're thinking. I came on my own, because he means a lot to me. Can you understand that?"

"Why, of course, my dear," May said.

"All right. I want you to let him alone. We've had a good time of it so far, and I don't want everything spoiled."

May sipped her coffee for a moment in silence. Finally she glanced at Brian. "May I ask why you came here?"

"Not at all," Brian said. He smiled. "I came to re-phrase my stepmother's comments, which I knew would be inadequate. Let me put it this way: I have no illusions about my father. However, there is enough of his money around to take care of everyone in his circle very nicely. I like that. So does Denise. So, I should think, would you. Do you see what I mean?"

"All too clearly," May said.

"I like things clearly understood," Denise said quietly, and it seemed she had recovered her poise. "We'll pay you to destroy whatever damaging records or information you have about Dan. That leaves one thing to settle: How much?"

May stood up; and Jake saw that she was angry, beautifully and completely angry.

She said to Brian: "You came here to re-phrase your stepmother's comments. You bungled the job. This overdressed creature," she said, swinging about suddenly and pointing at Denise, "who, I might add, blackmailed your father into marriage by feigning a maidenly hysteria at the prospects of a pregnancy which, after the wedding, turned out to be a false alarm, has about as much understanding of my work as a grub in a bag. She's worried about her meal ticket. She'd have to go back to doing the grinds if anything happened to Dan Riorden."

May raised her hand imperiously as Denise got to her feet, trembling with anger. "Don't lose control of yourself," she said coolly. "I am writing a book which interests me, and which will be finished quite soon. It's a work of art quite outside your comprehension. The fact that your husband is an integral piece in the mosaic I am doing is unfortunate—for you, that is."

"Just a minute," Brian said, gently. He patted Denise's shoulder in a soothing gesture before turning to May. "I love all this fine rhetoric," he said, "but I don't believe in it. I never heard a writer talk about an 'integral piece in his mosaics.' You're not kidding me, May."

"Oh, Lord!" May said, with mock despair. "Now the sophomores have figured me out, Jake."

"I'm no sophomore," Brian said, still smiling. "I've been through a big war, and I've seen girls with their clothes off, and I've filled an inside straight flush. But that's beside the point. I think you should stop acting, and listen to my proposition."

May lit a cigarette with an annoyed gesture, then sat on the couch and slumped back against the cushions.

"Please go home," she said. "Say that wonderful word 'good-by' and get the hell out of here."

"Let's go," Brian said shortly.

Denise glared down at May and there was naked hatred in her face. "You'll regret this, you bitch," she said.

"Good-by, my dear," May said languidly. "And by the way, ask Danny sometime about that girl in Amarillo. She was a Minsky grad too. Maybe you knew each other."

Denise walked out the room; and Brian, after an amused salute to May, followed her. Jake smoked in silence until he heard the front door close. Then he said, "You were in good form. All part of your unpopularity program, I take it?"

"I don't know what it's part of," May said in a musing voice.

Jake stood and glanced at his watch. "Well, I've got to run along, May."

May came to the front door with him.

"You look tired," he said. "Get some rest. And one other thing. Take care of yourself, will you?"

She gave him a little push toward the door. "Come on. Don't hang around on the slim chance that a good exit line will occur to you."

Jake grinned and patted her shoulder. She smiled at him as he went down the steps and when he reached the sidewalk he turned and they waved to each other.

Chapter Seven

THAT AFTERNOON JAKE TRIED TO GET SOME work done on an industrial account the agency had got recently. It was very dull, and Jake found his thoughts wandering time and again to May.

He had a hunch why she was planning to write the book. She was no longer the radiant, compelling woman she had once been; in the cheerful pastel lighting of her home she was still lovely, but the reckless, untended beauty had gone. That beauty had been a magnet and people had forgiven May a great deal because of it.

Her tragedy was that she couldn't change her values, or accept the change in herself. She was growing old and felt she was being shunted aside. She needed attention, and she was trying desperately to get it. That, he guessed, accounted for her touchiness about why she was writing the book. She was ashamed of what she was doing, and why she was doing it.

The pettiness of May's motivation didn't surprise Jake, because he had long ago decided that many of the lovely or ugly things men did had their origin in incongruously mean causes. Men fashioned towering philosophies to justify what ignorant nurses had told them as children, and great books and plays had been written because the authors hadn't made athletic teams or had acne. These insignificant irritants worked in the human soul like a grain of sand in a bivalve, and the results were things of great beauty or of terror.

Jake thought about it that afternoon and got very little work done. He dined alone and returned to his club about eight-thirty, where he read several current magazines before showering and going to bed.

That was at one-thirty.

The phone wakened him the next morning. He put it against his ear without raising his head from the pillow. "Yes?"

"Jake?" It was Gary Nable's voice, oddly strained. "Jake, May was killed last night. . . . Can you hear me?"

"Oh, God!" Jake said. He swung his feet from under the covers and came up to a sitting position, fully awake. "What happened?"

"She was killed—in her home, early this morning. Jake, what the devil will this mean to us?"

Jake glanced at his bedside clock. Seven-thirty.

"How did you find out?" he asked.

"It was on the seven o'clock broadcast. Jake, you'd better run out to her place and see what the police are thinking."

"Okay; I'll meet you in the office later."

From Jake's club to May's house was a ten-minute cab ride. When he arrived, he saw a small group of men and women on the sidewalk, and two police cars parked before her home. The whispering crowd regarded Jake with speculative curiosity as he went up the stone steps to where a uniformed policeman was on guard at the door.

"Hold it," the patrolman said.

"Who's here from Homicide?" Jake asked.

"Lieutenant Martin."

"Would you tell him Jake Harrison would like to see him? I think it will be okay."

The policeman went inside. Returning a few seconds later, he gave Jake a look of grudging respect. "Go on in," he said.

Lieutenant Martin was standing alone in the foyer. He smiled at Jake, and then they shook hands.

"What brings you here?" Martin said.

"May was a friend of mine. What happened?"

Lieutenant Martin rested an elbow against the curved banister and rubbed his chin.

"She was killed sometime this morning, around four. That's about all I know, but it's a weird case."

"What do you mean?"

"Come on upstairs. You'll see what I mean."

Jake had known Martin for fifteen years, dating back to when he had covered police for the *Herald-Messenger,* and Martin had been a detective working out of the third division in South Chicago. He knew Martin to be patient, painstaking and thorough, with a passion for orderly police work. Also he had imagination.

Martin stopped at the head of the stairs to let three photographers by, and then turned and went into May's bedroom.

Jake followed him slowly.

The figure on the bed had nothing to do with May, Jake told himself. May was gone. This sprawled and staring thing with the black sash imbedded deeply in the flesh of its throat was something else.

Rationalizing didn't help, and Jake could feel perspiration starting on his face. She had been wearing a billowing negligée of black lace and high-heeled black mules. One leg was doubled back beneath her body and one slipper had fallen off and was lying on its side on the floor. The black silken sash about her throat was obviously the belt she had worn with the negligée.

"See what I mean?" Martin said.

Jake saw he was looking beyond the bed. Following his eyes, Jake saw that the pink-toned mirror above May's dressing table had been marked with two large X's drawn with bright red lipstick. Cologne and perfume bottles had been swept from the dresser top to the floor, and clothes had been pulled from the closets and strewn over the floor and furniture.

"What do you make of that?" Martin said.

Jake shook his head. "You have any ideas?"

"Only guesses. The X's could mean that the murderer was referring to a double-cross." He glanced at Jake and smiled faintly. "Too pat, I think. Someone might have been looking for something, of course, or it could be that the murderer felt killing her wasn't enough. You know, a form of mutilation."

JAKE remembered then that May had kept her diary in this room. She had shown it to him the night before last, at her party.

He glanced over to the coffee table and saw that the lacquered box in which she'd kept it was closed. Crossing the room, he wrapped his hand in a handkerchief, opened the box and saw, without much surprise, that it was empty.

The record of May's wartime gossip, and the activities of quite a few prominent men, including Dan Riorden, had disappeared.

Martin came over, looking interested. "What're you looking for?"

Jake knew that Martin would eventually learn of the book May had been planning, and of Dan Riorden and other prominent men who weren't happy about the idea.

So he told Martin everything he knew.

Martin nodded slowly. "We'll look for that diary now. Working for Riorden. Maybe you know where he was this morning about four o'clock."

"Don't lose control of yourself," May said coolly.

"Haven't any idea. You're fairly sure of the time?"

"Fairly sure," Martin said, as they walked to the door. "The body was discovered by a Mrs. Swenson, a cleaning-woman who got here at six. She told us that she went out to mail some stuff that was in the hall, and when she came back and went upstairs, she found her mistreess dead."

"Did she lock the door when she went out?"

"No, but there's no chance that someone slipped in and did the job while she was away. The coroner definitely put it before four-thirty, and after three."

Chapter Eight

DOWNSTAIRS, JAKE WAS TURNING TO LEAVE when he saw two men coming up the steps. The policeman on guard stopped them, and said, "Nobody goes in now."

The man in the lead said: "Tell the officer in charge I'd like to see him."

Martin walked to the doorway. "What can I do for you?" he said.

"Are you in charge?"

"Yes. Martin's the name. Lieutenant Martin."

The man said: "My name is Prior—Gregory Prior, Chief of the legal staff of the Hampstead Committee. This is my assistant, Gil Coombs. I had an appointment with Miss Laval for ten o'clock this morning. Mr. Coombs heard on the radio that she had been murdered, so we came right out."

"I see," Martin said agreeably. "What kind of business did you have with her?"

Jake studied Prior with interest. This was the government agent making the initial investigation into Riorden's books and contracts. He looked young for the job, about thirty-four or thirty-five, with thick brown hair, and a firm, intelligent face.

Prior said: "I can only tell you this much: Miss Laval called my assistant, Mr. Coombs, last night about twelve and told him that she wanted to get in touch with me. I called her back later. She said she had some information I might be interested in, and we made an appointment for ten this morning."

"The information was in her diary, I think," Martin said. "Is that right?"

Prior didn't look surprised by Martin's information. He said, "That's what she told me on the phone."

"The diary seems to be gone," Martin said. "Anyway, it's not in its usual place. I'm going to look around for it now, and you can join me if you like."

"Thank you," Prior said.

Two policemen came in with a stretcher and started up the stairs. Martin said, "I'll be with you in a moment," and went up after them.

Prior lit a cigarette and then glanced curiously at Jake—who said: "We'll meet eventually, Mr. Prior, so why not now? My name is Jake Harrison."

"Yes?" Prior said.

"I'm handling Dan Riorden's public relations," Jake said, and extended his hand.

"Oh," Prior said. He didn't offer to shake hands.

Jake put his hand into his breast pocket and brought out cigarettes. "I'm surprised that May had decided to turn over her dope on Riorden to you," he said. "You know, she said she was going to use it in a book."

"Well, she didn't say anything about turning over the information," Coombs said. He was a thin, middle-aged man with alert features. "She merely asked me to tell Mr. Prior she wanted to talk to him."

"She didn't say the information concerned Riorden," Prior said.

Coombs said, "But we were hoping this might give us a lead to—"

Prior cleared his throat. "Hardly the place for that, Gil."

Coombs colored and nodded. "Sorry," he said.

"I hope you won't think of me as the guy on the other team," Jake said. He wondered to what extent he could soften up Prior. The man seemed sincere and earnest, and there was a chance he might be reasonable.

"Actually, our jobs are pretty similar," he went on. "You want to get the facts, and my job is to pass these facts along to the public, and to see that they don't become distorted on the way. I'll be glad to help you any way I can in regard to Riorden's background, activities, and so forth. Frankly, I want your confidence and coöperation, because my job is not to defend Riorden, but to keep him from being libeled by the implications of this investigation."

"We aren't sensation-mongers, Mr. Harrison," Prior said. "We aren't interested in anything but cold facts."

"That makes me feel better," Jake said, and did his best to appear ingenuously relieved. "And, off the record, I think you'll find that Riorden did just about what any other business man would have done, and what hundreds of them did, as a matter of fact. After all, we were at war and the pressure was on everyone to get stuff out of the factories and overseas. Cutting corners was a national pastime."

"Perhaps," Prior said, noncommittally, and seemed to withdraw into his shell, so Jake stopped pressing. He shook hands with both men and left.

JAKE got to the office twenty minutes later, at about eight-forty-five, and went in to see Nable. He related briefly what had happened; and added that he'd told Martin that Riorden was probably featured in May's diary.

Nable ran a hand through his disarranged hair and peered reproachfully at Jake. "Why the devil did you do that?"

"He'd have found it out anyway."

"I suppose." Nable went to the bar for a drink.

Jake said: "How do you know that Riorden had nothing to do with May's death?"

"I'm just hoping he didn't. The account wouldn't be worth a dime if Riorden went to the chair."

"That's a very objective way to look at it," Jake said. "You haven't heard from him by any chance?"

"Not a word. I talked to his wife, and she didn't know where he was."

Jake shrugged and walked to the door with Nable at his heels. "One thing, Jake," Nable said. "I—I'm going to need your help. I didn't go home last night. I'd

appreciate it a lot if you'd back me up on a story that I spent the night with you."

"That's a great idea," Jake said. He saw that Nable was actually shaky, that his normally bronzed complexion had an undercast of green. "Where were you last night?"

"I told my wife I was tied up in a business meeting," Nable said, lowering his voice. "Actually I dropped in to see a friend of mine at the Regis Hotel. She's a grand girl, Jake, a grand girl, and if you knew her, you'd know what I mean."

"Thank God I don't. What's her name?"

"Bebe Passione. That's a stage name, of course."

"Really? Gary, you're beyond me, at times. There's a murder investigation under way, and you, along with quite a few other people, may have to explain where you were at four o'clock this morning. Do you understand that?"

"I know, I know," Nable said hastily. "That's just it. If I tell the police I was with Bebe, then my wife will go melodramatically berserk. Don't you get it?"

"Sure, but I'm afraid I'll get it right in the neck." Jake patted Gary on the shoulder. "The answer, in a word, is 'No.' I'd like to help, but this isn't some college prank, this is murder."

"Well, all right," Nable sighed. "Maybe the police won't be interested in where I was this morning. Maybe it will all blow over."

"Very likely," Jake said.

He walked down to his office and sat down at his desk; but after fiddling idly with a letter-opener, he propped his feet on the desk and tried to think.

FROM his position he could look through the open door into the adjoining office, which was occupied by a girl named Toni Ryerston who had come to Nable's fresh from a night-school course in public relations. He got up and went into her office. Toni was reading a page of copy and holding a paper cup of coffee in her free hand. She was a thin, intense girl, with straight black hair, and an expression of brooding concentration.

"Hello, Jake," she said. "Did you hear the news?"

"Yes."

"Isn't it the damnedest thing you ever heard of? I've worked ten weeks on the Grant account, and this morning Nable sends me a memo that I'm being taken off it and put in the fashion department."

"Oh, that news," Jake said. "No, I hadn't heard about it. A memo, eh? That's pretty tough. You'd think he'd have called you in and given you a last cigarette and a blindfold before the *coup de grâce*. Did he say why?"

"I guess he just had a brainstorm."

"Well, you've got to expect things like that. This is the fabulous business world, you know. There's no point in calling Gary a fathead. That's obvious, because if he had any brains he'd get out and start an agency of his own instead of working for us."

Toni smiled. "I guess everything does happen for the best."

Jake wondered without any real curiosity what Toni would do without her stock of protective aphorisms.

Dean Niccolo came in through the other door, wearing tweeds and a pipe, and Jake noticed that Toni brightened up immediately.

Niccolo said to Jake, "Too bad about May. I just saw the news."

"What's all this?" Toni said.

"May Laval, a friend of ours, was killed this morning," Jake said.

Niccolo sat down in the chair beside Toni's desk and ran a hand through his hair. "I didn't know her very well, just bumped into her a few times around town. But she was a good egg. The police have any ideas yet?"

Jake said no, and then excused himself and returned to his own office. Jake's phone buzzed. Picking it up, he learned that Mr. Avery Meed, from Mr. Riorden's office, was waiting to see him. Jake told the receptionist to send him right in. When he put the phone down he saw that Sheila was standing in the doorway. She smiled and came to his side and put the back of her hand against his cheek.

"I heard about May," she said. "I'm sorry, Jake."

He squeezed her hand. "Thanks, I feel pretty low about it."

She picked up his desk lighter and held a flame to the cigarette he put in his mouth. "Would you like to go out and get drunk?"

"No, I've got work to do. But it's the best offer I've had all morning."

"Jake, I'm sorry for the things I said about her the other night."

"I know. You were mad at me, not her."

There was a dry cough from the doorway. Jake glanced up and saw a neatly dressed man standing there, a brief-case under his arm, and a politely expressionless look on his face.

"I am Avery Meed," he said.

"Oh, come in," Jake said. He introduced Avery Meed to Sheila, who excused herself and left.

Meed sat down in the leather armchair beside Jake's desk, his feet planted squarely together on the floor, the brief-case resting on his lap. He was past fifty, Jake judged, but his small body was firm, his eyes alert.

Jake said: "Mr. Riorden told us you could give us a picture of what we're going to be up against in this investigation. I'm an ignoramus about figures, so don't expect too much from me."

Meed smiled mechanically. "I will try to clarify any points you find confusing." Zippering open his brief-case, he placed two manila folders before Jake. "These statements cover the operations of the Riorden Mills and the Riorden Casting Company through 1943-1945."

Jake leafed through the two folders and saw that each contained summations of the various transactions, liabilities, assets, and balances of the two companies. The statement of net profit in each case was impressive.

"You did okay during the war," he said.

"Yes," Meed said.

Jake closed the folders. "Frankly, these things don't help much. Riorden told us the other night he had arbitrarily ignored certain Government specifications in casting gun-barrels. Is that all he did?"

"Basically, that is what happened."

"Then the Government is likely to call him a crook, I imagine."

Meed smiled. "The Government has to prove that. You know what happened, because Mr. Riorden was frank with you; but we don't need to be so frank with the Government."

"How about the companies' books? Won't they tell the story?"

MEED'S smile was pleased. "Books, Mr. Harrison, can tell many stories. You see, a set of books, kept with diligence and imagination, is in some respects like a dense, unmapped forest—quite impassable unless one knows where to look for trail markings."

"I see. Now check me if I'm wrong. Riorden deliberately used a cheaper grade of steel than specified in his contract, but the Government men aren't likely to find that out from your official records. Is that right?"

"Yes."

"Then how did the Hampstead Committee get on Riorden's trail in the first place?"

Meed shrugged his neat shoulders.

"There were several cases of premature detonation in barrels cast by our firm. I believe some personnel were killed in at least two of the accidents. Reports made out by company commanders and ordnance inspectors took

a long time to reach a level where they could be examined with any effect, but inevitably that happened, and the Riorden Casting Company was discovered to be the maker of the defective barrels. Hence this investigation."

Jake leaned back in his chair and fiddled with a pencil. Then he glanced at Meed. "What's your personal idea about this? I mean, do you think Riorden was justified in using cheap steel, considering that men were killed as a result of that action?"

Meed appeared surprised. "I have no opinions on the subject," he said. "Perhaps," he added, smiling, "I'm an unemotional man. The unnecessary death of American soldiers was an unhappy development, of course, but I see little point in applying moral terminology to the situation."

"I see," Jake said. "No one could accuse you of letting your heart guide your head. But tell me this: Do you know a woman named May Laval?"

Meed paused. Then he said: "No, I never had that pleasure. I understand from this morning's papers that I never will."

"Maybe you know she had a diary supposed to contain information about Riorden."

"Yes, I knew that."

"Well, the diary has disappeared. Supposing it turns up. What then?"

"I see what you mean. Yes, the information in the diary might provide a clue to this investigating committee. That is a chance we must take, since there's nothing else we can do about it."

Jake realized that he had learned little from Meed. But it was encouraging to know that the facts of Riorden's manipulations were safely buried in labyrinthine records.

As Meed was replacing the folders in his brief-case, Jake said: "By the way, do you know where Riorden was this morning—early, I mean? About four, say."

Meed looked directly at Jake and smiled. "Oh, yes, Mr. Riorden was called to Gary, Indiana, last night. He stayed over until this morning with his plant manager."

Nable could relax now, Jake thought.

Niccolo walked in as Meed was preparing to leave. Jake introduced them, and Meed smiled impersonally, then excused himself and left.

"Who was that?" Niccolo said.

"One of Riorden's smooth little cogs," Jake said. "Avery Meed. Very sharp."

"That's good," Niccolo said. "We need brains on our side. I'll see you around."

Jake sighed and went back to his desk. He worked for a few hours, accomplishing little. He was glad when his phone rang. It was Nable.

"Jake, get down to my office right away. Damn it, all hell has broken loose."

Chapter Nine

NABLE WAS PACING UP AND DOWN BEFORE HIS desk when Jake walked in, and the expression on his normally beaming face would have fitted a man whose brokers had sold him short on the same day his wife had run off with a best friend.

"We've been had, Jake," he said hoarsely. "Look." He grabbed a paper from his desk and pointed a trembling forefinger at a story on the front page.

There was a picture and an account of May's murder on the same page, but Nable was referring to another story, one which had been given to the papers by Gregory Prior.

Jake sat on the edge of Nable's desk and ran quickly through down the column. Prior had explained that his job was to investigate certain of Mr. Dan Riorden's wartime contracts, and to pass on his findings to the Senatorial committee. That much was okay.

The lead pipe descended in the last paragraph:

Mr. Riorden's high-powered press representatives have already sought me out, and have attempted to present their client to me as a man who did no worse than many others. Naturally, I do not intend to be influenced by these paid apologists.

There was more, but Jake tossed the paper down, and said: "Well, I'll be damned."

"Where did Prior get that story, anyway?" Nable said desperately.

"From me," Jake said. "I met Prior at May's this morning, and tried to creep into his heart. My charms are fading, I guess."

"What the hell are we going to do?"

"I'll tell you what," Jake said. "I'm going to make that fellow regret that he ever came near Chicago. The first thing I'll do—"

The phone interrupted. Nable picked up the receiver, and flashed a glance at Jake. "Yes, Mr. Riorden, we've seen it," he said.

Jake saw the perspiration beading Nable's forehead. "That story was a mistake," Nable said, with a wave at Jake. "All a mistake. You see—"

Jake took the phone from Nable's hand. "This is Jake Harrison, Mr. Riorden. I was responsible for that story."

RIORDEN'S voice was harsh. "Well, damn it, were you out of your head, or just drunk?"

"Let's relax a little," Jake said. "I met Prior this morning at May Laval's and took a chance on getting him into a coöperative mood with a show of frankness. I told him I was speaking off the record, which, as you probably know, is a convention that people in this business respect. Prior doesn't, obviously."

"Well, what are we going to do? That story makes me look like a crook who's hired a lot of fast-talking press agents because he's scared of the truth coming out."

"We'll take care of that. This afternoon we'll have a press conference. How's three o'clock for you?"

"The time is all right, but what will I say?"

"Leave that to me. I'll set this up at three in your suite, and we'll be over around two for a rehearsal. You've heard about May Laval, I suppose?"

"Yes, I read the papers. I— Damn' shame, I suppose. I spent last night in Gary and got the news when I got back to town. Did you see Avery Meed?"

"Yes, he just left."

"I see." Riorden sounded relieved. "I'm waiting for him, but he should be along pretty soon, I suppose."

"I suppose," Jake said, and cradled the receiver.

Nable was at the bar making himself a drink. He brought it to the desk and sat down nervously. "A press conference this afternoon is rushing things a little," he said. "The boys from the papers can make him look pretty bad."

Jake shrugged. "We've got no choice. The longer we wait after this blast of Prior's, the weaker our case gets. You'd better have your secretary call the papers and the wire services and tell them about the conference. I'll get Niccolo to work on Riorden's handout."

"Let's talk about that a minute," Nable said, rubbing his forehead gloomily. "What the hell *can* he say?"

"I think we'd better play it safe. We'll hammer away at the point that so far the Government has made no specific accusations, but is high-handedly damning Riorden in the press. We'll make Riorden the baffled, injured victim of fascist bureaucracy. I know it's not a brilliant pitch, but it's worked before. I'm not in a genius mood. I only hope to hell that Riorden can prove he spent the night in Gary. That will at least eliminate him as a candidate for the electric chair."

"I see what you mean," Nable said, and stared at his drink with a solemn expression.

Jake tried unsuccessfully to find Niccolo; but Dean had apparently gone out for a mid-morning snack. Jake returned to his office, rolled a clean sheet of paper into his typewriter and knocked out the speech for Riorden in half an hour. He had coffee and a sandwich at his desk, and rewrote the speech once more, trying to strike a tone that would sound unrehearsed and extemporaneous when Riorden reeled it off for the press.

Lieutenant Martin called him at one o'clock.

"Anything new?" Jake said.

"Nothing interesting," Martin said. He sounded dour. "We've checked the obvious things. May had two servants, a maid and cleaning-woman, but neither of them slept there. The cleaning-woman came in at six in the morning, because May frequently had breakfast parties around ten or eleven."

"They call it brunch," Jake said.

"Yeah, they would. Anyway, the maid left at two this morning. The party was over then, but one guy was hanging around. Guy named Rengale. I talked with him, and he says he left about two-fifteen. Do you know him?"

"Yes," Jake said.

"Damn' idiot," Martin said. "Talked my arm off about soap operas. He says they're the tone poems of the people, whatever that means. Anyway, he's clear. He was at a bar in the Loop from quarter of three to six-thirty."

"You didn't find the diary, I presume."

"No. But I want to talk to your boy, Riorden."

"I'm afraid that's a blind alley. He spent the night in Gary."

"Yeah? What was he doing in Gary?"

"How should I know? He owns steel mills in Gary. Maybe he went out to puddle some steel, or whatever it is you do with steel. When are you going to see him?"

"I thought you'd like to suggest a time."

"That's decent of you. Could you make it around four-thirty? We're having a press conference at three, and it would louse up our pitch if you arrived to arrest him about that time."

"I'm not going to arrest him. Four-thirty will be fine."

"Thanks. Let me know if I can ever fix a parking-ticket for you."

Martin said, "I fix my own." He paused, then said in a determined but embarrassed voice: "There is a little thing, Jake. My kid is having a birthday party this afternoon, and the wife thought it would be nice if he got his picture in the paper. Along with all the other kids, of course," he added hastily. "Do you think it can be arranged?"

"Sure," Jake said. "And thanks again for holding off on Riorden."

"Okay," Martin said.

Jake called Mike Hanlon, an old newspaper friend and asked if they had a photographer to spare for a kid's birthday party. Mike said sure, that everybody liked pictures of kids. And dogs, he added.

Jake put Riorden's speech in his pocket and started to look for Nable. He stopped at the open door of Sheila's office. She had her feet on her desk and was studying a huge cardboard sheet propped against the wall. The cardboard was covered with clips from various papers, and the inscriptions above them told anyone who cared that they represented editorial space that had used items about that prince of crackers, Toastee Cracker.

Jake walked in and sat on the edge of her desk.

"Admiring the kill?" he said, and patted her ankles.

Sheila put her feet on her floor. "You lost your extraterritorial rights, remember?"

Jake snapped his fingers. "I keep forgetting. Don't you think there's something unnatural about our working in such proximity?"

"I don't feel unnatural," Sheila said. "But I find your absent-minded passes a little disturbing. What do you think of that?" she said, nodding toward the Toastee Cracker display. "I got cracker recipes in two hundred cooking columns and had it plugged on the air about five hundred times on hints-for-the-home program. Not bad, eh?"

"No, in fact it's damn' good. Gary see this?"

"Yes, about fifteen minutes ago, but he's too upset to care. He gave it a startled look and said, 'Grand! Grand!' before rushing off. What's on his mind?"

"The Riorden press conference," Jake said.

"You wrote Riorden's speech, I suppose. Did you make him sound like Nathan Hale?"

"Stop being disdainful. I can't stand any of your idealistic contempt right now. How about coming over to Riorden's with us?"

Sheila glanced at her watch and frowned. "I've got to get six releases into the mails by four. You can't begin to loathe crackers until you've considered all the horrible things you can do with them. I've stuffed crackers into everything but the food editors' mouths."

"Have you tried soaking them overnight in a saucer of bonded Sterno? Serves four and serves them right. Come on."

"Okay," Sheila said. She smiled and got to her feet. "Gary won't mind, will he?"

"He won't be conscious. Hurry."

Jake walked on to Nable's office, feeling better. Sheila would be an asset. She knew how to talk shop with the press.

Niccolo was coming through the reception-room when Jake reached there. "I heard you wanted me this morning, Jake. Anything important?"

"Riorden's handout for the press conference," Jake said. "I did it myself. You'd better come on with us now. I'll want you to do some releases later this week, and you can get some background this afternoon."

"Okay."

Jake went into Nable's office without knocking. Nable had shaved and changed into another suit and his thick white hair had been disarranged with the usual care.

"Let's go," Jake said.

They met Niccolo and Sheila in the reception-room and walked out to the elevators, and, for some reason, no one was very cheerful.

"Well, buck up," Nable said, smiling nervously. "We've done it before and we can do it again."

"Blacken your faces, men, we're going in," Niccolo said solemnly, and winked at Jake.

Chapter Ten

They arrived at Riorden's suite in the Blackstone Hotel at two o'clock. The door was opened by Denise, who had a highball glass in one hand.

"Come on in," she said. "Danny is dressing, but he won't be long."

Brian Riorden was slumped in a deep chair by the fireplace, with one leg hooked over its arm and a drink in his hand.

"Here come the white knights to the old man's rescue," he said, grinning. "Have you got a de luxe halo to clap on his head, and an orchestra to play celestial music in the background?"

Denise said: "Oh, stop it, Brian."

Nable handled the introductions. Brian nodded absently at Sheila and said to Niccolo: "Haven't we met before?"

Niccolo said: "Yes. You were waiting for an elevator the other night at the office when I got off. You were concerned about whether or not I'd been in the Army."

"Well, I was a little drunk," Brian said. "But it's a good question. Were you?"

"It's a silly question," Denise said. "Can't I fix you people something to drink?"

Sheila sat down on the divan and gave Jake a quick amused glance. "Yes, I'll have a Scotch and soda, since everything is so cloudy."

Brian grinned at her. "Don't knock yourself out being sarcastic. I'm inconsiderate, I know. I'm eternally curious about what other people did while I was dropping little messages of good cheer on the Germans. Some of them did the funniest things. My father, for instance. He made money. And how about yourself? Did you have a nice war?"

"I wasn't in the paratroops, if that's what you mean," Sheila said. "But I didn't have a nice war."

The bedroom door opened, and Dan Riorden walked in, freshly shaven and wearing a double-breasted gray flannel suit.

He walked restlessly to the window, pulled back the drapes, then returned to the center of the room.

"Any details about May's murder?" he asked, of no one in particular.

There was an odd silence in the room, and Jake had the impression that Riorden had mentioned the thought that was on everyone's mind.

"I have just the bare facts," Nable said.

Jake settled back in his chair and glanced around. Practically everybody present, he realized, was probably relieved that May had been murdered. Riorden, certainly. And Denise and Brian also, since it secured the health and productivity of their golden goose. Sheila had no reason to care, but Nable was undoubtedly happy that an obstacle in the way of the account had been removed.

The question was, had any of these people killed May?

Riorden, who had the best reason to murder May, had spent the night in Gary, Indiana. Nable had no alibi, other than his own word that he'd spent the night with one Bebe Passione. Jake wondered where Denise Riorden had been last night, since no one had mentioned her being in Gary with her husband. And Brian—where had he been?

RIORDEN put a cigar in his mouth and lit it with a silver lighter from the coffee table.

"The police have any ideas yet?" he said.

"Not so far," Jake said. "She was killed around four, strangled with a sash from her negligée. They know that her diary is missing. And"—he paused, and glanced at Riorden—"they know the diary is presumed to have some hot information about you."

"How do they know that?" Riorden said quietly.

"I told them."

"Any reason for that?"

"Yes, of course. You and May had an argument about her plans for the book, which was overheard by most of the people at her party. The police would learn about that, so I told them to make it appear we, or you, rather, have nothing to fear."

"I have nothing to fear," Riorden said. "Your assumption that I need to be defended is a little odd, Harrison."

Jake sighed. "It's an occupational disease with me to copper all bets. I'm glad you have nothing to fear, because you have an appointment with Lieutenant Martin of the Homicide Division at four-thirty this afternoon."

"How do you know that?"

"He asked me when it would be convenient for him to see you. I suggested he make it after the press conference—for obvious reasons."

"I see." Riorden frowned, and then began to nod thoughtfully. "You mean, Martin is willing to coöperate because you were square with him about me. You were right." He grinned. "You're doing fine, Harrison."

Denise stood up impatiently. "I hate all of this," she said. "May Laval couldn't even die without making a scene. People will be saying you killed her to get the diary, Danny."

"People will say no such thing," Riorden said icily. He stared at his wife with controlled but unmistakable anger. "I was in Gary last night, if you remember."

Brian suddenly clapped his hands together in applause. "Tycoon saved by last-minute alibi," he intoned. "Free enterprise wins again."

"Oh, shut up," his father said.

"That's the trouble with all you people, you're so deadly serious," Brian said, getting languidly to his feet. "Come, Denise, I'll take you as far as the elevator."

Denise kissed Riorden on the cheek and picked up an alligator bag that matched her pumps, and a seven-skin sable which provided the last exquisitely expensive touch to her appearance. "I'm going to do some shopping," she said, and smiled around the room. "See you all again soon, I hope."

JAKE wondered if she had told Riorden about her visit to May's. The police would get to that eventually, and so would the papers. They couldn't do much, however, unless Denise or Brian was foolish enough to disclose their intention of buying or scaring her out of writing her book.

Brian waved to Niccolo from the doorway. "Don't take any wooden foxholes, chum."

Denise plucked at his arm. "Let's not get into the Battle of the Bulge with sound effects here."

They left, closing the door behind them. Jake stood up, took from his breast pocket the speech he'd written and handed it to Riorden. "Look it over and we'll talk about it a bit."

While Riorden read the speech Jake found his thoughts turning back to May. He couldn't get her from his mind. There was that business she'd had with Mike Locarno, the aging but still potent racketeer.

"It doesn't cover much ground," Riorden said, jerking Jake back to the present.

"There's not much ground we can cover safely," Jake said. "That speech will be okay if you handle it right. Read it again, then throw it away. Don't bother trying to memorize it, but get the ideas across in your own words. You're making just one point today—namely, that no formal charges have been brought against you, that you're in the dark, and at the mercy of the Government until such a time as they stop trying your case in the newspapers and charge you specifically with something—even if it's only playing your radio too loudly."

"I get your idea now," Riorden said.

"Fine. When you start talking, preface your remarks by stating that you'll answer all questions when you're through. There may be some embarrassing ones, but don't say 'No comment' to anything. If you don't want to answer a question, say you can't do it at this time, or that you don't know." He glanced at his watch. "Remember, these guys can spot a phony act a mile away, so just relax and be natural. Now, I'd suggest that you wait in the bedroom until they get here. Do you have anything to add, Gary?"

"One other thing," Nable said hastily. "The liquor."

Riorden waved to the phone. "Room service will send you anything you need," he said, and left.

Niccolo slumped down in the chair that Brian had vacated. "Did you ever hear a sillier idiot than young Riorden?" he said.

"Maladjusted, perhaps," Sheila said.

"He's making a cult out of it," Niccolo said disgustedly. He glanced at his watch nervously. "What the hell is holding up the press?"

"They're in no hurry to get their ears bent," Jake said. "They're probably all sensibly having a beer somewhere."

Ten minutes after the waiters had brought in trays of whisky and soda, there was a knock on the door and Nable squared his shoulders, drew his face into a broad welcoming smile and marched across the room with as springy a gait as he could manage.

Fifteen minutes later the room was crowded with photographers and reporters. Jake had known many of the reporters for years and he talked with them easily, and almost automatically got across the pitch he hoped they would take back to their editors.

He made the point, unobtrusively, that Riorden was in the dark because Prior, the official from the Government, was making him out to be a crook in advance of any charges or evidence. That was as far as Jake cared to go, since he knew that most of the men covering the story merely wanted to get it written and off their minds.

Nable called for attention, and after the buzz of talk died, he smiled gratefully and opened the bedroom door. "All set, Mr. Riorden," he said.

Riorden came out immediately and shook hands all around, and said hello to several of the reporters he'd known during the war. The photographers wanted to get their shots and clear out, so he posed for them, then waved the reporters into chairs and got into his speech.

He was good at handling men. He stood in the center of the room, and something in his manner made that the only natural place for him to stand. He stumbled for words occasionally, but he made his points with strong emphasis, and he came through as an angry but baffled man who wanted only to be told what the shouting was about so he could say a word in his own defense.

Afterward, when the reporters had left and Nable had distributed drinks jubilantly, Jake sat down beside Sheila. Nable was telling Riorden how well he'd done, and Riorden was puffing a cigar and smiling cheerfully.

"Well, how did we do?" Jake said to Sheila.

"Oh, fine. I'll tell you about it sometime."

"I know what you're thinking," Jake said. He felt an unaccountable depression. "Does your offer to help me get drunk still stand?"

"If you like."

Riorden was almost jubilant, Jake noticed. When the phone rang, he said, "I'll bet this is Meed," and scooped up the receiver with a strong quick gesture. "Riorden speaking," he said.

He listened a moment: and then he spoke, and his voice was low and hard. "I'll be right over," he said.

He lowered his hand to his side, still holding the receiver; an oddly disbelieving expression was on his face.

"What is it?" Nable said anxiously.

Riorden put a hand to his forehead and shook his head slowly. "Avery Meed was murdered in his hotel room this morning. I— That was a Lieutenant Martin on the phone. He wants me to come over there now."

He took a step forward, and noticed that he was still holding the phone. Frowning at it, he let it drop to the floor, then walked to the coffee table and poured himself a drink.

Sheila had sat up straight, and Nable was breathing heavily, obviously torn between the desire to say something, and the knowledge that there was nothing to say.

Niccolo alone seemed calm. He picked the phone from the floor and replaced it in the cradle. "You'd better take a cab if they want you in a hurry," he said to Riorden.

"Yes, yes," Riorden said, putting his drink down. "Call the bell captain. I'll be ready to go in a few minutes."

He walked into the bedroom, and Nable stared at Jake with shoulders expressively raised. "What the hell does this mean?" he said.

"Who knows?" Jake said. "Somebody's killed Meed, I gather. I'll go with Riorden and find out what I can."

"Got any idea who might have killed Meed, Riordan?"

"Fine," Nable said. He seemed relieved that someone was taking action which, whether effective or not, relieved him of the responsibility of doing anything.

When Riorden came out of the bedroom wearing a hat and topcoat, Jake jumped up and followed him out.

Chapter Eleven

Avery Meed had lived in a quiet residential hotel on the South Side, about twenty minutes' drive from the Loop. Riorden explained to Jake on the way out that Meed had maintained the apartment in Chicago, and a place in Washington which he had used when business took him to the capital. Meed had never married, and so far as Riorden knew, had no outside interests.

The hotel lobby was quiet and simple. An elderly clerk stood at the reception-desk, and behind him were racks of pigeonholes for mail. The only incongruous note in the atmosphere of determined dullness was the uniformed policeman at the elevators.

Jake told him who they were, and he waved them into a car. Lieutenant Martin met them at the door of Meed's apartment—looking, Jake noticed, tired and stubborn and angry.

"You're Riorden, I suppose," he said. "Come on in." To Jake he said: "What brings you here?"

"I was at Mr. Riorden's when you called, so I came along. Am I in the way?"

"No, stick around. You got any idea who might have killed Meed, Riorden?"

Riorden hesitated, as if giving the matter careful thought. Then he shook his head. "No, I haven't."

"Come on into the bedroom," Martin said.

They followed him into the bedroom, where two lab men were checking for fingerprints. The one off-key note in the spare, ascetic room was the body that lay on the bed, staring sightlessly at the calcimined ceiling.

Meed had been strangled to death with one of his own soberly correct neckties.

After what seemed a very long time Martin said, "We can talk in the living-room," and led the way back. He closed the bedroom door and nodded to Riorden. "You have anything to suggest?" he asked.

Riorden hestiated, and then said, "Yes," in a quiet, firm voice.

"Let's have it," Martin said.

Riorden sat down in an overstuffed chair by the window, deliberately unwrapped a cigar and lighted it; when it was drawing well, he said: "This morning, at my orders, Avery Meed went to May Laval's house to get her diary. That's news to you, I'm sure, Lieutenant."

Martin's normally pleasant face took on a hard, unfriendly expression. "Yeah, that's news," he said. "Supposing you go right on surprising me, Riorden."

Riorden appeared unimpressed by Martin's tone and manner.

"First, let me give you some background," he said. "I knew May Laval during the war—knew her quite well. May's home was a gathering-place for important people then, and I spent a good deal of time there. May, it has developed recently, kept a diary during those years, which she intended to publish in the form of an exposé."

"There's material about you in the diary that wouldn't look good in print, I suppose," Martin said.

"That's right," Riorden said calmly. "And Lieutenant, remember this: No one can make the money I have without also cutting corners and making enemies. I'm having trouble right now with a Congressional investigation, and this book of May's could have been very embarrassing. So last night I told Avery Meed to go to her home and get the diary. It was about twelve-thirty when I called him. I told him to meet any price she wanted, but to be damn' sure he got all references from her diary that related to me."

"That was twelve-thirty, eh?" Martin said. "Where did you spend the night, Riorden?"

"In Gary. I had some production bugs to iron out with my plant manager there, so I went out and spent the night with him."

"What's your manager's name?"

"Devlin—Robert Devlin. You want to check with him that I'm not lying?"

"Go on with your story," Martin said.

RIORDEN smiled slightly. "Okay. This morning at seven o'clock Meed called me in Gary. He said he had the diary. He also had something important to discuss with me, but he wouldn't talk on the phone. He had an appointment with Mr. Harrison here at nine, so I told him to keep that, then meet me at my hotel at eleven."

"He didn't show up, of course," Martin said.

"No."

Martin glanced at Jake. "Then you saw Meed this morning?"

"Yes, at nine-thirty. We talked until ten. That's about all I can give you."

"Did he seem upset?"

"He wasn't that sort."

Martin said: "Riorden, do you think Meed murdered May Laval to get the diary?"

Riorden knocked ash from his cigar and shrugged. "Who knows?" he said. "I told him to get the diary. Meed was the kind of person who did what he was told. Maybe May wouldn't go for the cash settlement. Meed's reaction to that obstacle would have been interesting. Picture him, the perfect automaton, moving ahead under orders from on high. Suddenly, the way is blocked." Riorden paused and glanced at Jake. "You met Meed, Harrison. What do you think he would have done?"

"No comment," Jake said.

"You think he would have killed her to get the diary?" Martin said, slowly.

"I honestly don't know," Riorden said.

There was a silence in the room for a few seconds, while Martin rubbed his jaw and stared moodily out the windows. Finally he shrugged, and said: "Here's what we know for sure. Meed came in here this morning at about six o'clock. Later, around a quarter of nine, he left, presumably to keep his appointment with you, Jake. He got back here at approximately ten-fifteen. He received a call from someone at ten-thirty-five, which he answered. Later in the day he got two more calls, which he didn't answer. Around two-thirty the cleaning-woman entered his room and found him lying on the bed just as he is now. She called the desk. They called us."

"I called him here twice this afternoon," Riorden said.

"He was dead then. The coroner put the time of death between ten-thirty and eleven-thirty." Martin lit a cigarette carefully and studied Riorden. "Now we get to the big question: Where's the diary now?"

"You didn't find it here?" Riorden asked thoughtfully.

"We've been through this place pretty thoroughly. We didn't find anything that looked like May's diary. You got any ideas where it might be?"

"No, I haven't," Riorden said, in the same thoughtful voice. He drew slowly on his cigar, then crushed it out in the ashtray. He said quietly: "Meed got the diary. Somebody killed him and took the diary. That's the person I want to find."

"We have an interest in that, too," Martin said.

Riorden stood and picked up his hat. "You may get him before I do," he said. "I don't know. But remember this: I was ready to pay nearly anything for that diary. I'm not going to be stopped now. Frankly, I don't give much of a damn that Meed was murdered. To me, he was a well-oiled, smoothly-functioning cog that never gave any trouble. He's no use to me now. But I want the diary."

"Sure you do," Martin said, with a humorless smile. "The dirt on you is now in somebody else's hands, isn't it?"

"That was my first thought when you called me," Riorden said. "Now, if you don't need me any more, I'll run along."

"Sure," Martin said.

Jake left with Riorden. Downstairs Riorden shook hands with him, then caught a cab to his hotel. Jake hailed the next one and rode back downtown to the office.

Sheila was typing with a concentrated frown on her face when he walked into her office. She stopped and pulled the paper from her typewriter.

"Ready for our bacchanalian binge?" he said.

"Okay. But what about Meed?"

"I'll tell you later."

Jake watched her as she touched up her lipstick, and smoothed her dark hair quickly and unnecessarily. She went to the wall mirror, and he noticed the unconscious grace of her movements as she adjusted her small green hat. He sighed and looked out the window.

FOG had been rolling in from the lake, and the streets below were hidden in layers of swirling grayness; the towers of the Loop rested on this fog-cloud like the minarets of a ghost city.

Sheila came to his side and put her hand on his arm. "Depressing, isn't it? Looks as if one strong wind could blow it all away."

"Yes, it does," Jake said. "And in about five more seconds I'm likely to say something esoteric and mystical. So let's get out of here."

They had cocktails and dinner at the Palmer House, and finally wound up at Dave's on Michigan Boulevard. Jake lit a cigarette and tried to relax. Dave's was good for that; the décor was stubbornly and restfully old-fashioned.

Sheila sipped her brandy. "What's wrong with you?" she asked. "No epigrams, no impish revelry. You make me a little sad."

"That's quite an indictment. What do you suggest?"

"I'd suggest you call Gary Nable right now and tell him you're turning in your typewriter and hand-painted tie for good. Then find yourself an honest job. Maybe you'd make a good sharecropper. But naturally, you won't do that."

"Naturally," Jake said. "But why do you think it would help?"

"I think you're getting fed up with yourself, Jake. I think you're getting an oh-so-tiny pang of conscience about the Riorden account."

"Oh, stop it," Jake said irritably. "Why should I have pangs of conscience about the Riorden account? It's just a job."

"Supposing he's proved to be a war profiteer? Would that make any difference in your thinking?"

"I would suggest to Gary that we double our fee, that's all. Sheila, honey, I'm not sincere or idealistic. Now let's talk about something cheerful."

"Okay. What do you want to talk about?"

"I don't want to talk about May, but she's on my mind. This afternoon I learned that Riorden sent his prim little hatchet-man, Avery Meed, to get the diary from her. Meed apparently succeeded. But then somebody killed him. The diary is again missing."

"What are the details?"

He told her what he knew. When he finished, Sheila made a little circle with the bottom of her glass on the table. Then she said, "What does Martin think?"

"He seems to be in the dark. But I wouldn't like to be the boy he's after."

"You look harried enough to fit the rôle. Jake, this may be a far-fetched idea, but could Riorden have killed Meed?"

Jake looked at her sharply. "What do you mean?"

"Supposing Meed murdered May and got the diary. And supposing Meed suddenly decided then that he could blackmail Riorden very profitably. That's a possibility, at least. Riorden might have had to kill him to get the diary. He has no alibi for the time Meed was killed, remember."

"That's right," Jake said. Then he shrugged. "But I can't let you hang a murder rap on my client. If Riorden's a murderer I don't want it to get bruited about."

"Naturally," Sheila said. "Mind if I ask you a personal question, Jake?"

"Why, no. Go ahead."

"Maybe I should know the answer, having shared your bed and board for two years. But just what do you believe in?"

Jake waved to Dave for another round. "We're going to be here a long time," he said. "I don't know why it is, dear, but that question always makes people excited and garrulous. They will worry it around all night until someone gets glassy-eyed and belligerent because he can't convince everyone else that the only thing to believe in is sex rampant or the dictatorship of the proletariat."

"Oh, stop being so utterly, utterly clever," Sheila said. "I asked you a serious question. Do you want to answer it or not?"

"Okay, I'll try," Jake said resignedly. "Dear, a man can believe in anything at all if he tries hard enough and gets some satisfaction out of it. The world is full of apothegms, slogans, religious proverbs and old saws, that are more or less true, and which can be adapted to any temperament and situation. There are a thousand to choose from, and they're all shining and beautiful: 'Honesty is the best policy!' 'Hamilton is a fine watch!' 'Every cloud must have a silver lining!' Take your pick. They're all wonderful; I believe in them all."

"Let's forget I asked," Sheila said. "That mood of brittle elfishness you affect is quite a bore. I gather, though, that Riorden's innocence or guilt doesn't make any difference to you?"

"Well, why should it? I'm not his confessor."

"How long are you going to kid yourself? Eventually, Jake, you're going to wind up with Nable's attitude, that a dollar is its own reward, and that decency is a droll superstition for peasants."

"Oh, it's not that bad," Jake said. "Supposing Riorden's guilty? I don't see that it's my concern. As a press agent I'm retained to make him look good. Hell, we'll create a bumper demand for lousy barrels, and Riorden can corner the market in the next war."

Sheila looked at him for a moment in silence; then she picked up her purse and gloves and slid from the booth.

"I'm going to run along."

"Oh, don't go off in a pout," Jake said. "I know you're disgusted. I am, too. My mother must have been scared by a corny gag before I was born. Don't leave me tonight, Sheila."

"Sorry, Jake. You're just not very funny."

He watched her walk through the bar, and let herself out the door. Sighing, he picked up his drink. . . .

Jake lay awake that night for what seemed a long time. The liquor wore away slowly, leaving him tired and depressed. Why did he always behave like such a sophomoric idiot with Sheila? Lighting a cigarette, he tried to get his mind on something else. The only alternative was the murders of May and Avery Meed, and thinking of them led him to a frustrating dead end.

But as he put out the cigarette a few minutes later, he remembered something. Nable had told him he'd spent the night with Bebe Passione at the Regis; he had wanted Jake to cover up for the sake of his wife.

Thinking about Nable's story, Jake began to wonder whether it wasn't too pat and plausible. Anyone knowing Nable would immediately believe it, of course. Nable was born to be involved with a chorus girl on the night of a murder for which he would need an alibi.

Jake grinned and picked up his phone. He asked the club operator to get him the Regis Hotel.

He talked to the hotel clerk very briefly. And when he put the phone slowly back into its cradle he was no longer smiling.

Bebe Passione had left for Miami ten days ago.

Chapter Twelve

JAKE GOT DOWN TO WORK THE NEXT MORNING at ten-thirty and found Nable in his office exulting over the morning papers.

"Did you see these, Jake?" he cried happily. "They're beautiful, simply beautiful."

Jake hadn't. He walked around behind Nable's desk and glanced at the stories, which had been inspired by the press conference in Riorden's suite the previous afternoon.

From the agency's and Riorden's standpoint, they were excellent. The dominant tone was that Riorden was being harried by officious Government snoops. There was, in addition to the straight news coverage, a feature story on Riorden's Chicago plants in the *News*, with production figures to indicate their importance to the war effort. And in a front-page editorial entitled STOP THE WITCH HUNT, the *Tribune* ominously warned its readership that free enterprise and the American Dream were being threatened by these promiscuous and irresponsible investigations. The Committee, the editorial concluded, under the direction of one Gregory Wiltford Prior, had brought no charges against Mr. Riorden, but had, nevertheless, already damaged his reputation by implication and innuendo.

"Get that line about Gregory Prior," Nable said, delightedly. "Jake, we're off to a running start."

"Did we make the wires on any of this stuff?"

"You're damned right. AP and UP covered, and *Newsweek* has already called this morning and asked for dope on Riorden. I got Niccolo busy on a handout."

"Fine," Jake said.

He picked up a fresh copy of the *Tribune* from Nable's desk while Nable began to outline an idea for a picture story on Riorden's family life, with the accent to be laid heavily on its domestic simplicity and young Brian's war record.

Jake listened absently and went through the paper. The murder of Avery Meed was on the first page, the fact

of his having been Riorden's secretary giving it additional news value. May was on page four now, and there were no further developments in either case.

Nable suddenly pounded his fist on the desk, and said: "There! What do you think of that?"

"Oh, great! I'll get someone on it right away."

"Jake, you act as if you're tired or something."

"I was taken unexpectedly drunk last night," Jake said.

"You'd better check into a steam bath this afternoon," Nable said. "We've got to be at top form from now on, you know."

"Yes, I know," Jake said. "Where were you the night that May was killed, Gary?"

Nable remained motionless behind his desk, staring at Jake expressionlessly; but Jake saw his hand move and close nervously on the handle of a long letter-opener.

"Why do you want to know?" he said finally.

JAKE shrugged. "Let's not make small talk. I found out last night that Bebe Passione hasn't been in town for ten days. She's in Miami. You said you were with her the night before last when May was killed. I know damn' well you weren't in Miami, Gary. So where were you?"

"I went to see May that night," Nable said, and suddenly he looked old and frightened. He met Jake's eyes anxiously. "I—I thought I could clear up that business about the diary. Jake, I need the Riorden account. Grant's canceled last week, but I didn't tell anybody about it, not even you. You know I can't talk about a lost account. It's like talking about dying. Anyway, I thought if I could straighten things out with May, it would put us in solidly with Riorden."

Jake sat down tiredly in a deep leather chair and rested his head against the back. "Was she alive?" he asked.

"Yes, she was alive," Nable said quickly. "I got there around two-thirty, I guess. I told her what I wanted, but she wouldn't go for it, Jake. She didn't want money."

"What did she want?" Jake asked.

Nable shrugged helplessly. "I don't know what she wanted, Jake. She seemed glad to see me, and we had a drink or two. But I couldn't make any progress with her. She was just in one of those moods. She said she was expecting someone else at three, and hustled me out."

"Yes? That's interesting. Who?"

"She didn't say." Nable scratched his head. "But it was odd. She told me about it, and then she laughed. It was a private joke, I gathered."

"Okay. You said she was in 'one of those moods.' What do you mean?"

"I'll be damned if I know exactly," Nable said, frowning. "But it was just that she didn't seem to be taking me or herself seriously. It was all an act we might have been doing in a charade game. There was a young ass from Chicago University there when I arrived. Maybe she was showing off for him. He had a crew cut and horn-rimmed glasses and was behaving as if he'd been on a steady diet of Oscar Wilde for years."

"This was two-thirty?"

"Yes, and May was wearing red silk Mandarin pajamas and there was incense burning on the mantel." Nable shook his head. "It was all pretty disgusting."

"That's a fine middle-class attitude," Jake said. "What you mean is that her refusal to be bribed by you was disgusting."

"Don't snap at me," Nable said, peevishly. "I'm not up to it. Maybe 'picturesque' is what I meant. At any rate she chased this character from the University, and we got down to business. But we didn't get down far enough. She just laughed at me, said she was touched by my concern for Riorden, but that she couldn't let that stand before her artistic integrity. But," and Nable suddenly pounded his fist on the desk in exasperation, "she was laughing at me all the time. She didn't mean any of that stuff about artistic integrity."

"I know what you mean," Jake said. "Where did you go when you left her?"

Nable wet his lips and got to his feet. "I just went out and got drunk," he said; "I felt lousy, and one drink led to another. I heard the radio flash about May in the Croydon bar, so I called you, and then came over to the office. I—I realized that it would look bad if it came out that I'd been to May's. So I cooked up the story about being with Bebe for you, and hoped you'd cover up for me by saying we'd been together all night talking business."

Jake sighed. "I don't care very much, understand, but have you got any witnesses at these bars where you did your drinking? Do you have anybody who can back up your story?"

"You know how things like that are, Jake," Nable said. "You have a few drinks, and talk with somebody you don't want to talk to, and then you go out and drift somewhere else, and do the same thing. Who'd remember me? I'm just a fat man who wears loud ties and talks all the time."

"For God's sake, cut it out," Jake said, disgusted and amused at the same time. "Instead of all this corn, I'd suggest you backtrack your route of that night and look for someone who can support your story. The police will get to you eventually, and they'll want more than a dissertation on the bitter irony of solitary drinking."

"I'll do that," Nable said with a switch back to his normal vigor. "Now, you'd better check on how Niccolo is coming with that job for *Newsweek*."

"Sure. First things first," Jake said, and left Nable staring after him perplexedly.

Jake walked down to his office, careful to keep his eyes straight ahead when he passed Sheila's open door. He didn't feel up to an apology this early in the morning.

Lighting a cigarette, he walked restlessly to the window, observing with dour satisfaction the cold cheerless view of the boulevard and lake.

For a few minutes he tried to think about the Riorden account, but his thoughts slid away from that and settled on the circumstances of May's death.

THE one fact they had to work with, it seemed, was that Avery Meed had gone to see May at Riorden's request, and had come away with the diary. That was what Meed had told Riorden, at least. Meed might have lied to his boss, although there was no apparent reason for that, and Riorden might have lied to Lieutenant Martin; but, again, there was no reason for it. Taking everyone's word, then, Meed had gone to May's home, had got the diary, and had come away with it.

Then had Meed murdered May?

There was one point that made that more than a possibility. Meed had intended to buy May off; and if he had been successful, then the money or check should have been among May's effects. She would hardly have given him the diary on his promise to pay.

Therefore, since the police had found nothing of the sort, Meed must have taken the diary without paying for it—and he could hardly have done that while May was alive. Possibly, very possibly, it seemed, he might have made his offer, been refused and then decided to kill her to get the diary.

The other possibility was that May had been dead when Meed arrived. If that was true, then May was murdered by someone with no interest in the diary, for it had been left for Meed to find.

There was still Mike Locarno unaccounted for, Jake knew. Mike, that amiable assassin, would have murdered May with a sigh of regret but without hesitation if he thought it necessary to his peace of mind and safety.

Jake's reflections were cut short by the ring of his phone. The receptionist told him Gregory Prior was waiting and wished to see him immediately.

"Send him in," Jake said, and settled back in his chair with a smile.

Prior appeared in the doorway of Jake's office a moment or so later, wearing an expression of grim and righteous anger on his face.

"Well, this is pleasant," Jake said. "Sit down, won't you?"

"Thanks," Prior said. "I won't take much of your time. I guess you've seen the morning papers."

"Why, yes," Jake said. "Why?"

"You know what I'm talking about. Did you see the *Tribune* editorial, for instance?"

Jake smiled innocently. "Now that you mention it, I remember it quite well. It mentioned you by name, I think. Said something about witch-hunting, didn't it?"

"You can afford to be amused," Prior said bitterly. "Do you realize you've already, with that one editorial, convinced thousands of people that Riorden is merely being hounded by a snooping, bureaucratic committee?"

"Well, that was my fondest hope," Jake said mildly. "But after all, I didn't write the editorial."

PRIOR's lips tightened. "I know you're responsible for the present attitude of the press on the Riorden investigation. Frankly, I can't understand people like you, Harrison. You're willing, even glad apparently, to defend a thieving war racketeer like Daniel Riorden. You'll do anything at all, I suppose, for money."

"That's a nice, simple way of putting it," Jake said equably.

Prior lit a cigarette with a quick, angry gesture; then, after inhaling deeply, he looked directly at Jake and said: "Ever have any trouble sleeping nights? Do you ever ask yourself what principles, if any, you live by?"

"Oh, for God's sake!" Jake said. "I don't lure small children into alleys, and I don't speak snidely of free enterprise, and I sleep wonderfully. What that has to do with the subject, however, escapes me. Getting to the point, I suggested we work harmoniously on this account, but you ignored that, and at the first opportunity, sounded off to the papers in a manner that made Riorden look like a culprit. So I hit back. You seem to want to know why I did; well, now you know."

Prior shook his head with a gesture of controlled desperation. "You talk as if this were a boxing match. Don't you understand that my job is to track down a man who has cheated and defrauded his country in time of war, has cost the lives of American soldiers to fatten his own bank account? You're distorting and impeding that work because you're paid to do so, and I say it's scandalous."

"Oh, relax a minute," Jake said. "You're annoyed because you've been held up as a symbol of fascistic bureaucracy. Well, that's a bit thick, of course. But even if I weren't paid to think so at the moment, I'd have a low opinion of your committee. The important thing right now is that Riorden has not been charged with any crimes, and until he is, and until that charge is proved by due process of law, then it's my job and my duty to defend him from the mudslinging innuendoes, and damnation-by-association tactics of you Washington ferrets."

"Do you actually believe that?" Prior asked.

Jake let out his breath slowly. For a second he wished he could feel convinced he was doing a job because it was the right thing to do; he wished he was standing on the side of the angels. But of course he wasn't.

"No, I don't believe that," he said shortly. "I'm a press agent. And public relations is a process which takes money from a client, and puts it in the pocket of a press agent. But as long as you have no case against Riorden, then my position is proportionately stronger. Until you get some evidence. I'll just knock you silly in the papers every day."

Two people had died because of what this contained.

"Okay, then, listen to this," Prior said. "I came to Chicago as Senator Hampstead's representative, to investigate a contract Riorden made with the Army to produce one-hundred-and-fifty-five-millimeter gun barrels. Do you know how we got on his trail? No, you probably don't know, or care. We received reports from theater commanders in the ETO, reports which had come to them through company, regiment, and division commanders, about barrels which cracked and split during combat firing. It took time to coördinate these reports, to determine what firm had supplied most of the defective barrels, and to get ordnance reports on the quality of the metal recovered from those burst guns. That was a long, painstaking job; and when it was completed, we saw that Dan Riorden's company had made most of those barrels.

"Now we're moving in on him. Already our first check into his books tells us that he arbitrarily ignored his contracts with the Army. He used a cheaper grade of steel, a steel that cracked under the heat and pressure of firing."

Jake fingered his letter-opener and shrugged slightly. "You probably have more information than I do, Prior. But Riorden told me that much himself. He said it was a question of using cheaper steel or of making no barrels at all. He preferred using the cheaper steel."

"Sure, he would," Prior said harshly. "Because he charged the Government for the price of the high-quality steel. Riorden owns, among other things, a casting company and a steel mill. He bought cheap steel from his mill, and made a profit on the sale, and then he put that cheap steel into the barrels made by the Riorden Casting Company. When he sold those barrels—supposedly made of high-grade steel—he collected a double profit, the first on the sale from his mill to his steel company, and secondly by unloading that inferior material at a price paid for the very best steel."

"You've worked pretty fast," Jake said.

"We're still working, too," Prior said, grimly. "We also know that Riorden bribed a Government plant inspector, a man named Nickerson, to okay the faulty barrels. When we catch up with Nickerson we'll have a case that Riorden will never wriggle out of. Possibly you can understand my irritation now. Maybe I sounded like a stuffed shirt coming in here to complain about your doing your job, but we know what your client is—and it hurts to be made a fool of when you're in the right."

"Of course," Jake said absently. He was thinking that the agency would have to change its pitch on Riorden now. Jake hadn't thought much about Riorden's guilt or innocence, but he had felt that if Riorden were guilty he would have covered things so he wouldn't be caught. Obviously, he was not only a crook, but a stupid one.

"Why don't you simply lock him up, if you've got him cold?" Jake asked.

"First of all, that's not our job. My report goes to the Senator, who is an able and conscientious man, and he decides whether or not his committee will investigate the matter thoroughly. When that investigation is over, the Attorney General will move in to prosecute. And our case right now is not fully completed. We won't get through his books for several more weeks."

Prior stood up abruptly and smiled at Jake. "You probably think I'm a very naïve person to come here like this and raise hell with you for making me look like a fool in the papers. Perhaps I did sound off to the reporters without thinking. Maybe we can have lunch some day, and stop fighting each other."

"Of course," Jake said. He found himself rather admiring Prior's frankness.

THEY walked down the corridor to the reception-room together, and Jake found his thoughts turning to May again, as they seemed to inexorably. He said: "Here's something I'd like to talk to you about. May Laval was a friend of mine, and I talked with her the night before she was killed. I knew about the diary she'd kept and what she intended doing with it, of course, and I asked her to lay off Riorden. She said she was going ahead with the book, not to spite Riorden, particularly, but because it was a thing she had to do. Now, what changed her mind? She called you later that night, didn't she?"

"Well, she called my assistant, Coombs. About one in the morning, I think. She said she had some information that we might find useful. Coombs told me, and I called her and made a date for the following morning. The next morning we learned she'd been killed. I understand from the papers that now a man named Avery Meed has been killed, and that he had the diary."

"That's right," Jake said. "But the diary is still missing."

"Well, perhaps it will turn up. I'd like to see it, you know. You say you knew this May Laval. What sort of a person was she?"

Jake shrugged. "That's a difficult question," he said.

They entered the reception-room, and Prior stopped with his hand on the doorknob. "Judging from the papers, she was simply a rather glorified—tramp."

"That's not quite accurate," Jake said. "She was a generous friend, and could be loyal, warm-hearted and amusing. Her vice was that she needed attention, and worked a bit too hard getting it."

"Yes, I saw her house, you know," Prior said. "She apparently used everything from her red pajamas to her furniture with the thought of hitting you squarely in the eye. Her book would undoubtedly have been wonderful reading. But tell me this: the papers said Meed took the diary from her home. Does that mean he killed her?"

"It's a thought," Jake said. "It's undoubtedly occurred to the police."

"Yes, it's an obvious idea," Prior said.

They were both silent a moment, and then Prior smiled at Jake, and said: "We're in the Postal Building if you should want me."

The receptionist waved to Jake as he turned from the door and started back to his office.

"I have a call for you. You can take it here, if you like."

"Thanks," Jake said.

To his considerable surprise it was Denise Riorden. They talked of unimportant things for a while, and then she said: "I would like to talk with you this afternoon. Do you have any free time?"

"Why, of course. How about two-thirty, here at the office?"

"Couldn't we have a drink somewhere? Offices are too functional to suit me."

Jake raised an eyebrow at the phone. "All right." He thought a moment, remembered an invitation to a cocktail party that had been in the morning mail. "How about the lobby of the Palmer House at two-thirty?"

"That's fine."

Jake put the phone down and wondered what the devil Denise Riorden wanted to see him about. He didn't like the idea of rendezvousing with clients' wives. It was unpolitic.

Walking back to his office, he decided that the time had come to make amends with Sheila, so he stopped at her office. She was working at her desk, looking cool and lovely in a gray suit with a red flower pinned to the left lapel.

"I'm sorry about last night," he said. "I was pretty much of a damn' fool, I suppose."

"Don't be sophomoric, Jake." Sheila looked up and smiled briefly. "I was wrong last night, too. It's none of my business what you think and believe."

"And never the twain shall meet, eh?" Jake said.

"I think you've used me as an ersatz conscience long enough," Sheila said, looking down at her desk. "Maybe you've felt that if one of us disapproved of some of the things you've done with the agency, that was enough. I'm through being an indulgent mother to you."

"Let's talk it over when I get rid of this hangover," Jake said moodily. "This is like having a cop tell you he doesn't care what you do."

"I'm no cop," Sheila said. "You can break all the windows in the block from now on, and I'll have no objections."

"Whee!" Jake said in a listless voice, and went out.

Chapter Thirteen

IT WAS ELEVEN-THIRTY. JAKE SAT AT HIS desk, staring at the leather-bound clock for several minutes without moving. He knew he should be working. The agency would need something spectacular in the way of a campaign if Riorden were guilty. And Prior quite obviously knew Riorden was guilty and had the proof in names and dates to back up his charge.

But he didn't feel like working. He thought about May again and finally decided to take a trip out to Mike Locarno's suburban farm. . . .

Jake told his cab driver to wait and walked down the gravel path that led to Locarno's place, a sprawling ranch house of impressive dimensions. A stockily built man wearing a leather windbreaker stepped around the side of the house and sauntered down to meet him.

"Who'd you want, pal?" he said amiably.

"I'd like to see Mike. I'm a friend, Jake Harrison." He recognized the man and smiled. "You're Yeabo Jones, aren't you?"

"Yeah, how'd you know?" the man said.

"I covered your trial in 1938. You got six years for armed robbery and aggravated assault and battery."

"Oh, yeah," Yeabo said. "You was a reporter, eh?"

"That's right."

"Well, come on up to the house, and I'll see what the boss says."

Yeabo told him to wait at the door while he went inside. Jake lit a cigarette and looked up at the bare elms and cold steely sky.

Yeabo opened the door behind him and said: "Come on in."

Mike Locarno was seated in a large chair before a log fire, wearing soft gray flannel slacks and a gabardine sport shirt with hand-stitched lapels and cuffs. He got to his feet when Jake entered, and came to meet him, a wide smile wreathing his face into a network of wrinkles. There was another person, a show-girl style of blonde,

lying before the fireplace with a Martini at her elbow. She sat up tailor-fashion and regarded Jake solemnly.

"Jake, you old son-of-a-gun," Mike said, wringing his hand. "Nice of you to blow in like this. You know Cheryl, huh?"

"Why, no. But it's a pleasure."

"It's Cheryl Dane," the girl said. "He thinks I'm a horse or something, with just a first name."

"Well," Mike said, smiling at her, "what do you need with two names? One's good enough for anybody." He took Jake's elbow and pushed him toward a chair. "Now sit down and we'll have a drink. —Yeabo!" He sang out the last word loudly, and the blonde winced.

Yeabo brought wine for Mike, and Jake had a Martini. When he disappeared, Mike settled back in his chair with a comfortable sigh. "This is good, eh?" he said.

"Fine," Jake said, and sipped his drink.

"Anything in particular on your mind?" Mike asked.

"Yes, there is," Jake said slowly. "I'm wondering if you know anything about who killed May Laval. I know you were worried about her book, and—"

"And you think I had her killed, eh?" Mike said.

"No, I don't think that at all," Jake said. "If you'd killed her, you'd have got the diary, I think."

Mike tapped his forehead significantly. "See, you got a good head."

"I suppose you're looking for the diary now?"

"Oh, yes, my boys are looking for it. I think they'll get it, too."

"Do you have any guess as to who killed May?"

"You know that is very funny," Mike said, frowning, and touching his lower lip with a forefinger. "Who should kill her, eh? I've thought about that a lot, all the time in fact since she was killed. And I don't know. You know May and I used to play poker in the old days. Me, May, Ed Hogan the alderman, and a bartender at the Old Troy Club. May, she was a real son-of-gun." Mike shook his head gently. "Mother of Heaven, what games! May could shove a thousand dollars into the pot and grin at you, when she had nothing, not even a pair. Ah, what days we had then, eh?"

"Yah, yah," the blonde said. "I never met one of you guys from Prohibition days who didn't act like fat men at a college reunion."

"She's real cute, eh?" Mike said.

"Well, what's this poker game got to do with May's death?" Jake said.

"Oh, nothing," Mike said, with a tired wave of his hand. "But nobody minded losing to May. Oh, the money, it was too bad to lose, but nobody got real mad. She was liked, eh? And that's why I wonder about who could kill her."

Jake shrugged. "Wouldn't you have killed her, Mike?"

Mike took his arm, and they walked to the door together. "I'll tell you a secret," he said.

"What's that?"

"I would have very quick," Mike said.

"That's what I thought."

"Ha!" Mike said, and tapped his forehead again. "You got the head, Jake."

"Thanks. Good-by, Mike."

"Good-by."

As Jake walked down the drive, he drew his overcoat tight around him against the cold hard wind that was blowing. The cab driver turned into the driveway, and Jake climbed in and lit a cigarette while the driver backed up to turn around.

They were ready to pull out when a shout from the house made the driver stop. Jake looked out, and saw Yeabo running toward them with a gallon jug of pale brown liquid in each hand.

Jake opened the door and said, "What the hell is that?" as Yeabo came up beside the car.

"Cider," Yeabo panted. "We make it right here. The boss wants you to have it."

"Tell him it's just what I wanted," Jake said.

Driving back to the city, the driver glanced over his shoulder and said. "That's a real friendly gesture, I'd say. I mean, it's kind of old-fashioned to give guests something like that to take with them."

"My friend is of the old school," Jake said. "But I'm not. Would you like it—the cider, I mean?"

The cab driver said that would be fine, and Jake said okay, and told him to drive to the Palmer House. He sat back wondering what was on Denise Riorden's mind.

Chapter Fourteen

AKE WENT UP THE STEPS LEADING TO THE lobby of the Palmer House and after a quick glance around saw her sitting in a chair beside a tall palm and idly turning the pages of a fashion magazine. "Why, hello," she said, rising. "You're punctual."

"Men my age have to cultivate minor virtues to compensate for our lack of major vices," Jake said.

He suggested a drink and they went upstairs to a private room on the mezzanine where some thirty or forty young men and women were standing about and drinking liquor provided by a radio station.

Jake got two drinks from the bar and led Denise to a green satin sofa. She sat down rather cautiously, and he realized that she had been drinking.

He held a match to her cigarette and said, "Now what burning motive prompted you to call me?"

Denise smiled. "You'll think I'm foolish. But I liked you. And my life gets very dull at times. So I thought I'd get to know you better. It's as simple as that."

"That's very flattering. But I can't believe your life is dull."

Denise sipped her drink and patted his arm. The gesture was oddly intimate, and Jake had the ridiculous feeling that he was going to start edging away from her any minute.

"Danny is busy most of the time, you know," she said, smiling. "He's an old-fashioned husband. He thinks a woman is part of the equipment in a well-run home."

"Let me fix your drink," Jake interrupted, just to be saying something uncompromising, and left her long enough to get two fresh drinks.

She was glancing at the other people at the party with interest when he returned.

She said: "Where in the name of God do all these brilliant young people come from, and what are they doing here?"

"Well, this is a business cocktail party and these young people work for advertising agencies. The station hopes to obligate them to the extent of a few highballs, so that when their agencies buy time, they will remember WXL fondly."

"Does it work out that way?"

"Sometimes, I suppose. But mostly not." He glanced up at the crowd. "I don't see anyone here who could make a decision on anything more important than taking an extra comma from a piece of copy."

"They sound very smart," Denise said dubiously.

They did indeed, Jake reflected. The air was thick with the inside of "inside" stories, and the scraps of conversation that fell around him sparkled with epigrammatic criticisms of all art forms, of all entertainment, of everything. Two young men directly in front of them were arguing heatedly about an article from the *Partisan Review*, while behind them a scoop of Drew Pearson's was belittled as having told only half the story.

"Can I have a drink?" Denise said. "These people are terrific. I feel like the real bourgeois."

"You rotten fake—I'll show you what you've earned!"

"It's just talk," Jake said. "Really, it's a trick."

He brought her a drink which she finished quickly. She was quite tight, Jake saw. Her bright blue eyes focused on his intently. "You're thinking I'm just a drunk and aging wife of a client, aren't you? Somebody you'd damn' well better be nice to."

"No, I wasn't thinking anything of the sort," Jake said.

"Well, what are you thinking? You're not thinking of me by any remote chance, are you?"

"Yes, I was thinking of you," Jake said, and smiled. He wanted now to get her home. "I was thinking a drive might be pleasant."

"God, that's a feverish thought," Denise laughed. "You've got to be more controlled, Mr. Harrison. Keep that wild Latin temperament of yours in check."

"I'm not called the North American continent for nothing," Jake said, hoping the gag, old and undistinguished though it was, might serve to put her in a better humor.

"Oh, yah, yah, yah," Denise said. "You think I'm a bore. Just a dumb babe on the make. Well, I know something that might surprise you. Danny thinks you're doing a lousy job for him."

"Well, he's right," Jake said. "But it's a tough account."

"Also I know something about your great and glorious May Laval." She bowed her head in mock solemnity. "Everyone has to do that when they mention her name, you know. She was so damn' witty and clever and wonderful and now she's so damn' dead. Isn't that a laugh?"

"I suppose it has an element of humor in it," Jake said.

"Oh, don't bother making me feel ashamed. You're wasting your time."

"But what do you know about her?" Jake said.

"I know that Danny sent Avery Meed to her apartment to get her diary. Now, isn't that delightful news?"

Jake felt let down. That much Riorden had already admitted. But he was curious as to how Denise knew as much as she did, and hopeful that she might know more. So he said: "You're doing fine, but you'll have to do better than that to shock me."

Denise said, "I don't know anything else." She sipped the last of her drink. "You see, Danny Boy does a lot of business from home by phone, so I listen in on the extension by my bed. That's the only way I can find out anything."

"I see. And you heard Danny Boy tell Meed to go to May's apartment and get the diary?"

"That's right. And he was really mad. He told Meed to get that diary or else."

"Then Danny Boy left for Gary?"

"No, he didn't leave until the next call. You see, Avery Meed called Danny Boy back, and said he had the diary. And he said he had something else to talk to Danny Boy about. I was kind of sleepy then, and didn't hear much else. But that's the way it was," she concluded firmly.

Jake lit another cigarette and tried to keep his voice casual. "Where was Danny Boy between those two calls?"

"He was in the living-room. You see, I was in bed."

"You didn't see him between those two calls? I mean he didn't come into your bedroom?"

"Sure, just as he was leaving for Gary." She frowned. "That was *after* the second call, though. He said he was going out to Gary, and he told me—"

She stopped suddenly, and a look of dismay flickered across her face. For a moment she stared at Jake, and then she laughed nervously.

"Did he tell you to remember that he'd left for Gary earlier—much earlier—in the evening?" Jake said gently.

Denise looked at him and then shook her head. "I didn't realize how much I'd drunk. I'm having pipe-dreams. Would you take me home?"

"Wouldn't you rather talk, or perhaps go some place where it's quiet? I find you very fascinating all of a sudden."

"No, I'd rather go home. You're not being very bright, you know."

They went down to the lobby, where Denise became a very unsteady package to handle; and Jake wondered if she were really that drunk, or just pretending to avoid talking with him.

If she had told him the truth then Riorden's alibi was shot; he had been in town at the time of May's death. Jake realized then that they had only Riorden's word for Avery Meed's part in the story. Riorden might have killed May, and then invented a story that made Meed look guilty. After that he could kill Meed, and the police would have their culprit and be satisfied. The heat would be off and Riorden would be free and clear.

It was all so possible that Jake felt slightly cold thinking about it.

WHEN they finally reached the Riorden suite at the hotel, Jake felt as if he had been through a stiff, cross-country race. He fished the key from Denise's purse and let them in. There seemed to be no one at home, for which Jake silently thanked God.

Denise sagged against him as he helped her inside and got the door shut. But she revived when she realized that she was home.

"Drink, Jake?" she said cheerfully.

Disengaging herself from him with a conspiratorial smile, she made for the liquor cabinet, with a slight list to port; but she changed her mind on the way and pirouetted with surprising grace toward the long couch that ran under the windows. Sinking onto it with one foot trailing on the floor, she said, "There is no place like home, after all," in a wondering voice, and closed her eyes.

Jake was lighting a cigarette when he heard a key in the door. He shrugged philosophically and turned as Dan Riorden let himself in, looking preoccupied.

"Well, what's this?" he said. "What's wrong with her?" he said, glancing at Jake.

"We had a drink this afternoon, and I think Denise had one too many. She's okay. Just sleepy."

"I see," Riorden said.

He walked to her side and shook her shoulder. She opened her eyes and said plaintively: "Okay, Muscles, knock it off."

"You'd better go to your room," he said.

She struggled to a sitting position, looking contrite. "Don't be that way, Danny Boy. I—I just picked up a little load, that's all."

Riorden said, in a softer tone: "All right, but you'll be more comfortable in your room."

Denise stood up and clung to him until she became accustomed to the perpendicular position. "I was just having a little fun, Danny." Placing her arm around his neck, she kissed him on the mouth.

Riorden put his hand on her waist, and they stood together for a moment. When he released her, there was a smile on his face.

"You're so nice to me, Danny," she said sleepily. "Let's go off somewhere for a while and be together. Let's go to the lodge again and swim in the moonlight and make love before the big fire. Please, Danny."

"You want to go to the lodge again, eh?"

"Oh, yes, Danny Boy," she said and put her head on his shoulder.

RIORDEN put an arm about her waist and led her through the arched doorway of the living-room. He returned in a few moments.

"Do you want a drink?" he said to Jake.

"No, thanks. But I'd like to talk to you."

"Okay, go ahead," Riorden said.

"I've just had a talk with Prior, the Government investigator."

"Oh," said Riorden. "I thought you might be going to explain how you and my wife happened to be spending the afternoon together, and how she got drunk."

Jake said: "We spent the afternoon together at a cocktail party, because she phoned and asked me if I'd like to have a drink. She got drunk by lifting a fresh drink to her mouth fifteen or twenty times. You know damn' well, Riorden, that people get themselves drunk. Let's get back to Prior."

Riorden looked at Jake appraisingly for a moment. "You're smart. If you'd had any mealy-mouthed apologies about this afternoon, I'd have tossed you out on your ear. But I know Denise, and I know this afternoon wasn't your fault."

"That's two of us convinced of my purity," Jake said. "Now to get back to Prior; he seems to think he's got you cold."

Riorden shrugged impatiently.

"I know. He's found an ink blot somewhere in my books, and he's going to send me to jail. There's no one more officious than a four-thousand-dollar-a-year Government clerk, when he thinks he can annoy a man with money."

"This seems to be more than an ink spot," Jake said. "Here's Prior's story: Your contract for 155-mm. gun barrels specified a certain grade of steel. He thinks you used a cheaper grade, which you bought from your own mill, but charged the Government for the price of the specified steel. Also, he told me that you bribed a plant inspector, by the name of Nickerson, to okay the defective barrels."

Riorden laughed humorlessly. "They're working like beavers, aren't they? Are they looking for Nickerson?"

"Yes."

"Fine," Riorden said. "Nickerson died a couple of years ago. They'll get a lot from him, won't they?"

"They seem to have all they need without him."

Riorden looked at him shrewdly. "Let's understand each other, Harrison. You're on my side because you're getting paid. I may be a crook for all you know, but that doesn't make my money less valuable. But you may have scruples. Do you stay on the team or get off?"

"That's a pointless question," Jake said wearily. "I'm your press counsel, remember? I can't talk effectively to editors unless you give me straight information. You haven't done that so far. First you sent Avery Meed to May's to get the diary after telling me you'd let me handle the matter. Now Prior tells me a story about your operations that differs from yours on several important points. I can't do you any good unless you keep me briefed on what's happening, and tell me a straight story about your dealings with the Government."

"That makes sense," Riorden said; "you want to know how much of Prior's story is true, I suppose. Actually, it makes no difference to you one way or the other, does it? Your loyalty is for sale, and I'm buying it. I expect you to work just as hard for me if I'm a crook as you would if I were honest. That satisfactory to you?"

"Yes, that's quite satisfactory," Jake said after a pause.

"Fine. I like realistic people, Harrison. The world is glutted with fools who refuse to accept the simple, blunt facts of life. The world makes heroes of successful people. But it doesn't put the credit where it belongs. The truth is they should be praised for their rapacity, their single-minded absorption with making money, for those are the things that send you up the ladder. You should have spent some time in Washington during the war. By God, you could write a book about it. If I wrote it, I'd call it 'The Pig Trough.'

"But to get back to Prior; he's bluffing. He's got no case against me, and he's getting desperate."

Jake thought of asking Riorden bluntly as to his whereabouts the night of May's murder. But as he had lied to the police, there was small likelihood he'd change his story now. Jake walked to the door and Riorden came with him and shook hands with him strongly.

"Don't be a worrier, Jake," Riorden said. "I don't like worried people around me. They exude defeat. Nobody can touch me, remember that."

"Okay," Jake said. "I'll remember that."

He walked down to the elevators thinking over what Riorden had said, and wondering why he hadn't advanced any argument against Riorden's point of view. Once in his life he would have. But now he wasn't in any position to, he perceived. Riorden was a crook and a thief; but Jake was running his errands. You couldn't impost a moral judgment on anyone whose money was jingling in your pocket.

Chapter Fifteen

WHEN JAKE WENT OUTSIDE TO GET A CAB AN idea occurred to him. He could regain Prior's good will by telling what he'd learned of Nickerson—namely, that the man was dead. That would save Prior the time of making an investigation, and it couldn't possibly hurt Riorden.

Prior's unit was installed in a suite of offices in the Postal Building. A busy young man in the reception-room told Jake that Prior was in conference and couldn't be disturbed. Jake said he'd wait a moment and took a seat.

There was a door directly before him that led to a private office, and the transom above the door was open. Through this aperture a high-pitched irascible voice suddenly sounded:

"Excuses, gentlemen, are the base coin with which incompetents hope to buy the respect of conscientious men."

The young man at the desk glanced at Jake and then up at the open transom before returning to his work with noticeably renewed energy.

The voice continued stridently: "The papers in this city have joined in excoriating your work, and I refuse to believe that this unanimity of opinion is traceable to anything but some egregious mistake in your procedure."

"Senator Hampstead has arrived, I hear," Jake said, recognizing the voice.

"That's right," the young man said, and smiled politely. "The tempo picks up a little when he's around."

"I can imagine."

Jake had met Elias Hampstead, senior Senator from a Midwestern State, several times in Washington and Chicago. The Senator had a stanch and zealous national following, and a reputation among his followers for selfless honesty, unflinching rectitude, and deathless integrity.

He had been elected in the Twenties on a fusion ticket which had as its platform the reëstablishment of the pioneer principles of godliness and decency. He immediately sponsored bills which respectively advocated the abolishment of horse-racing, dog-racing, prize-fighting, professional baseball, and drinking. He became the butt of a thousand gags and cartoons. He was railed at as the personification of prudery, the epitome of provincial insularity. But among certain cheerless sects he came to be looked upon as a sort of down-to-earth, homespun Messiah.

Near the close of the war the Hampstead Committee was formed to investigate war profits and the breath of fear blew across the back of anyone it turned its attention to, because this committee was as harsh in its judgments as the laws of the Old Testament. The committee took its character from Senator Hampstead. He was incorruptible. His past was without a flaw or stain. He had lived for thirty years with a gray, retiring woman who had died shortly after their only son was killed in the war.

Such was the man, Jake thought with the humorless smile, who would weigh the evidence against Dan Riorden. It would be difficult to imagine two men more opposed in their tastes, convictions and motivations.

The door of the private office opened, and Senator Hampstead emerged, trailed by Gregory Prior and Gil Coombs.

The Senator was a commonplace-looking man, with straight, graying hair, appraising eyes, and features somewhat too small and bunched together to be handsome, but which were not unrefined. He was of middle height and his body was spare and well cared for. He wore a gray suit and carried a walking-stick.

Jake said: "Hello, Senator. We've met before. My name is Harrison."

"Oh, yes," Senator Hampstead said. His normal voice was high, affected and irritating. "You're handling the public relations of that poltroon Riorden, aren't you?"

"That's right," Jake said, easily.

"You've made our job difficult with your tactics. There should be a law that would permit us to lock up men like you."

"Why don't you introduce one?" Jake asked. He felt pleasantly angry. "It would hardly be noticed with the rest of your crackpot legislation."

"Good day," Senator Hampstead said slowly. And Jake knew he had hurt the man, and that he would never be forgiven. "Come along, Prior," the Senator said.

"All right," Prior said. He gave Jake a quick glance and shrugged helplessly as he followed the Senator from the office.

Coombs grinned at Jake. "The Senator is in a rare mood today. Come in, won't you? No need for us to bark at each other, at any rate!"

Inside the private office Jake saw neat stacks of ledgers and account books on two conference tables. "The Riorden records," Coombs said, running a hand through his thin hair. "Helluva job going through them. And it's mine, all mine," he added with a smile.

"No help!"

"Oh, yes. I'm just looking for sympathy. I have three accountants helping me, and Greg—Mr. Prior—takes care of the legal angles and runs the main show. Did you wish to see him?"

"Yes, but I can leave the message with you. He was looking for a man named Nickerson, who worked in a Riorden plant during the war as a Government inspector."

"Oh, yes?"

"Well, Nickerson is dead. I thought it would save you some time to know that. That information comes from Riorden, so it's probably accurate."

Coombs smiled. "Riorden must be a fascinating man." He glanced at the books on the table. "Very bold, very venturesome, very adroit. That's the impression I'm getting. But I'd better make a note of that fellow's name. What was it?" He made a record of it on his memorandum pad.

They talked desultorily for a few moments then, and finally Jake said good-by to Coombs and went out to the elevators. He glanced at his watch and realized that the working day was about over.

It was five o'clock when he reached the office, and the receptionist told him that Mr. Nable had gone for the day, and also that a package had come for him in the afternoon which the office boy had delivered to his desk.

The package was lying on his desk, a flat object about twelve inches by twelve and two inches thick, wrapped in brown paper and tied clumsily but firmly with strong twine. Jake sat down, untied the knots and tore off the wrapping paper.

The package contained a large leather-bound book. Jake stared at it for a moment without recognition; and then he realized where he had seen it before and a cold tremor went down his back.

This was May's diary.

Jake sat for a moment holding the diary in his hands, and the only thought in his mind was that two people had died because of what it contained.

From the adjoining office he heard Toni Ryerston humming tunelessly, and he saw that her silken ankles were in their customary position atop her desk. He put the diary down and walked to the doorway that connected his office with Toni's.

"Mind if I close the door?" he said. "The draft through here is reaching the typhoon class."

"I'll try to live," Toni said.

Jake smiled and closed the door. Returning to his desk he picked up the diary and opened it to page one, which was dated the first of January, 1943.

Flipping to the back of the book, he saw that it ended on December 31st, 1948. It was a six-year diary, with each page containing space for three days.

He frowned, trying to guess why the diary had been sent to him, of all people. Assuming for a start that Avery Meed had killed May to get the diary, whoever had sent it to him must be the person who had murdered Meed. But why in God's name should anyone kill Meed to get the diary, and then mail it to someone else?

Jake opened the diary to the last half of 1944, which was the time that Riorden had known May, and he immediately saw that someone had been at work with scissors. There were pages cut from the diary in every month from June through December of 1944. And it didn't take him long to see that there was no mention at all of Riorden in May's diary.

Jake looked at the obvious conclusion for a moment: someone had removed all reference to Riorden from the diary. That could have been Avery Meed. Or it could have been done by the person who murdered him.

For a few minutes he turned this idea over in his head, and then he picked up his phone and called Sheila's office. When she answered, he asked her if she would stop in for a moment. She hesitated, then assented.

She appeared half a minute later, wearing a coat, and carrying her bag and gloves. "I was just leaving when you called," she said.

Jake closed the door behind her and picked up May's diary from his desk. "I wanted you to see this."

Sheila glanced at the book and then opened it and began reading. Suddenly she caught her breath sharply.

"Where did you get this?" she asked.

"It came in the mail."

"Who sent it?"

"I have no idea."

She sat down carefully in the chair behind his desk. "What does it mean, Jake?"

"I'm not sure," he said. "However, it opens up some interesting ideas. Riorden, you know, sent Avery Meed to get the diary from May. Then someone murdered Meed later that morning and took off with the diary. Whoever sent this to me is probably the person who murdered Meed."

"Have you looked through it yet?"

"That's another thing." He leaned over her shoulder and opened the diary to the last half of 1944. "You'll notice that someone is collecting Riordeniana. There's no mention of him in the diary now."

She said, "Then whoever murdered Meed probably has the goods on Riorden now?"

"That's possible."

"What are you going to do with it?"

Jake grinned ironically. "What do you think I'm going to do?" he said. "I'm going to take a look at how our betters behaved themselves during the war."

He opened the diary to page one.

May's account of her wartime relationships with gangsters, industrialists, artists, movie stars, generals and prostitutes was a fascinating chronicle, Jake realized after reading only a few pages. She recounted verbatim conversations; and her memory for names, dates and places had been amazing. There was the saga of a three-star general whose name had become a household symbol for idealism and unflinching honesty during the war, but who, according to May's record of his comments while drinking, was actually little more than an office boy for one of the nation's major industries. The diary teemed with names, big and little, with intricate transactions designed to pad someone's pocket at the expense of someone else, and with the details of assignations, infidelities and promiscuities of all varieties.

Jake shook his head. "No wonder Riorden was worried."

"He must still be worried," Sheila said.

Jake looked at her thoughtfully. "Yes, of course. The dossier on him is still in limbo."

"Maybe not," Sheila said, thoughtfully.

Jake lit a cigarette, reflecting that Sheila was right. Riorden might not be worried any more, for the good reason that he could have killed Meed and obtained the incriminating information from the diary.

"That doesn't explain why he sent the diary to me," he said finally. "Let's stop playing detective and give this thing to Martin."

"You can take care of that errand yourself."

"I wish you'd stop being so impersonal," Jake said irritably. "I'm depressed, and I'd like to talk with you. Why don't you have dinner with me tonight?"

Sheila shook her head. "Sorry, Jake. Something is bothering you, but you'll have to figure it out for yourself."

"I don't expect you to take me on your lap and calm my fevered crying," Jake said. "I merely want you to have dinner with me and laugh at my gay commentaries on the weather."

"Not tonight," Sheila said. "But thanks."

"Oh, not at all," Jake said. He opened the door for her, and watched her walk away with quick light steps. . . .

Jake took a cab to Central Station and found Martin sitting in his warm smoke-filled office, with his feet on his desk, staring out at the swirling snow that was falling over the city.

He put the diary at Martin's elbow and lighted a cigarette while Martin swung himself around in the chair and opened the book. For several moments he skimmed through the pages without comment or expression; then he glanced up at Jake, and said quietly: "Where'd you get this?"

Jake told him how he had received the diary, and added that he had noticed a number of pages had been cut out, and that there was no mention of Riorden in the diary.

Martin didn't answer for a moment. He stared at the book and turned a few pages idly, a thoughtful frown on his face. Finally he said: "I want you to do me a favor, Jake. Don't tell anybody about bringing me this, will you?"

"You're the boss."

"I want to surprise some people," Martin said. "I don't want anyone to know how it came into my hands. Okay?"

Jake said okay and then spent a half-hour talking with Martin, mainly because there was no place in particular that he wanted to go, and nothing in particular he wanted to do. They didn't talk about the two murders that were on their minds. They talked about local politics, about the days when Jake covered a police beat and Martin was in uniform.

Chapter Sixteen

May was buried the next morning after a pallid undenominational service in a North Side chapel. There were banks of magnificent flowers about the closed coffin, their heavy fragrance blending nicely with the solemn organ music and the pale sincerity of the young man who conducted the service. May had deserved better than that, Jake thought ruefully as he walked out of the chapel.

Someone dropped a hand on his shoulder, and when he turned he saw Mike Locarno standing behind him with a sad smile on his face.

"It was too bad, eh, Jake?" Mike said, with a shake of his head.

"Yes, it was too bad," Jake said.

They moved to the curb to avoid the crowd that was coming out of the chapel.

"May was a good friend of mine for many years," Mike said. "We were very close." He shook his head sadly. "Such good friends we were. The police are having no luck finding her murderer, eh?"

Jake smiled. Mike had several police captains on his payroll, and if he wanted to know how a police investigation was going, he had only to pick up a phone. "They are temporarily baffled," he said.

"Too bad," Mike said, with a heavy sigh. He peered at Jake with his eyes half-closed, and smiled gently. "The diary, I understand, has been found. Did you look through it, Jake?"

"Yes, I looked through it, Mike," Jake said evenly. "I didn't see anything about you that was unflattering."

Mike shook his graying head in a gesture of annoyance. "I knew there wouldn't be," he said. "I mean, I wasn't sure, but my first idea was: 'Why, May won't hurt you, Mike. Don't be a fool.' But I couldn't just relax, you know, so I worried about it."

"I don't think you have to worry any more," Jake said, but as he spoke, he realized that he had been working on the assumption that the material cut from the diary must have referred to Dan Riorden.

Actually, it could have referred to anyone. He wondered if Martin realized that.

Mike touched his arm. "Can I drop you somewhere, Jake?"

Jake said he was going downtown, and Mike stepped to the curb and glanced down the street. He didn't wave

or change expression; he merely indicated by the gesture that he was through talking—and a long, black Cadillac halfway down the block pulled away from the curb and shot down the street to come to a smooth stop before them.

"Ah, here we are," he said with a surprised smile. "Get in, Jake. How're you doing with Dan Riorden?"

"Fair enough," Jake said.

"You know, Jake, sometime I must have a talk with you about public relations. Could you get the papers to stop calling me a hoodlum?"

"Why do you care what they call you?"

"I tell you, I don't care, myself, Jake; but I got two granddaughters in a convent out West, and I don't think it is nice for them to have me called a hoodlum. Maybe you would call me this week, and we could have a long lunch and talk this over, eh?"

The car slid to a stop before the Etruria Building as Mike finished talking, so Jake nodded, and said: "Sure thing."

Mike slipped a card into his hand. "My private number," he said. "You give me a ring, eh?"

"Sure," Jake said.

Mike chuckled good-humoredly and climbed back into his car. The driver let out the clutch, and the Cadillac rolled deliberately and insolently through a red light, and then turned left past a sign that said NO LEFT TURN and disappeared down the side street.

Jake shrugged and walked into the building, wondering why he didn't throw Mike's card away.

THE receptionist told him that Nable wanted to see him. Jake found Gary seated at his desk, wearing a flamboyant sport jacket and puffing energetically on a cigar.

"What's up?" Jake said.

"Riorden called me yesterday afternoon, said he'd just talked with you and that you'd told him Prior was hot on his trail. That right?"

"That's what Prior told me," Jake said.

"That means we've got to pull his claws. We've got to hit hard and fast, Jake."

"I'm all for that," Jake said.

Nable stood and looked down at Jake with a worried frown. "Jake, I don't like to mention this, because I know you've been trying hard, but you're just not producing for Riorden. Here it is now, four days since we got the account, and we haven't even started planning a campaign."

Jake stretched his legs and rested his head against the back of the chair. He said: "I'm sick of the account, Gary."

"What the devil is wrong with you?" Nable said. "An account is nothing to get sick over. It's business."

"This one is pretty raw. What the hell can we say for Riorden? There's no defense to make, no extenuating factors to introduce. He's a crook."

"That's not for us to say, thank God," Nable said. "Jake, you're just having a touch of spring fever or something. But we've got to see Riorden this afternoon at his hotel. He called and made the date. So try, Jake, try to dream up something to keep him quiet for a while."

Jake shrugged. "All right," he said with very little enthusiasm.

After lunch Jake walked to Riorden's hotel because the day was clear, and the wind off the lake was refreshingly cold. Riorden opened the door in answer to his knock, and Jake saw that Nable and Niccolo were already on hand, and that Brian Riorden was lounging on the sofa with a highball in his hand. Sheila was present, and that surprised him. He couldn't figure out her interest in the Riorden account. She was talking with Brian.

There was a general murmur of greeting which died away as Denise strolled in through the dining-room, wearing a white satin hostess gown and white satin mules. She smiled at Jake and shook her head ruefully. "Hello," she said. "You took me three falls to a finish in the drinking department, I guess."

Riorden glanced at her evenly, and said: "We're going to be busy here, Denise."

"Okay, I just wanted something to keep me company." She made herself a drink from the tray of bottles on the coffee table. Brian grinned at her and said: "The picture of typical American womanhood. Modestly attired in a white robe with a low bosom and a straight slug of rye in a highball glass."

"Don't you like the picture?" Denise said carelessly.

"I love it," Brian said.

Riorden watched as she walked across the room and out of sight; then he turned to Nable.

"I called you here to find out what the next move is, so let's get to work," he said.

Nable went into the picture feature he had planned for the Riorden family, but Riorden interrupted him with an irritable wave of his hand.

"That's all right, I suppose, but who cares that I carve whaling ships out of corks as a hobby, and water my own front lawn? I want something startling, something to slow these Federal snoops down to a crawl."

"Well, in that case," Nable said, as confidently as if he knew where the sentence was going to end, "in that case, we'd better do some thinking out loud. I have an idea that might be feasible, but I'd rather hear from Jake first," he said.

Jake had been thinking while Nable and Riorden talked. An idea that was just about cheap and unsavory enough to work had occurred to him.

Riorden looked at him. "Well?"

"Yes, I've got something," Jake said. "First of all, and this will be news to you, the police have May's diary."

"How do you know that?" Riorden said.

"I got that much from Lieutenant Martin. Also, and what is more important to us, there's no mention of you in her diary. Maybe there was at one time, but someone has been at work with a scissors and you're out of the star-studded cast."

There was a silence in the room for the moment, and then Riorden said thoughtfully. "That's very interesting."

Brian looked at his father with a grin.

"Damn' interesting! Someone else has the goods on you now." He laughed and slumped down comfortably on the couch. "Perhaps somebody here can help you out. Do any of you happen to have the record of the old man's boyish pranks during the war? He was a cute one, you know, with his self-exploding barrels and stratospheric profits."

Riorden turned to his son, and Jake sensed a finality in the set of his broad shoulders.

"That's all of that, Brian," he said.

"Now don't get tremulous and sensitive," Brian said.

RIORDEN looked at him calmly for a moment. Then he walked slowly across the floor and stopped before Brian.

"You rotten little fake," he said, enunciating each word with relish, "I've listened to your moral blackmail for the last time."

With a sudden strong gesture he fastened his hands in the lapels of Brian's sport jacket; then he jerked him powerfully to his feet. Brian's breathing came harder, but he stared into his father's eyes with an insolent smile.

"You came home four years ago," Riorden said in a savage voice. "I provided you with an income that you couldn't earn if you were fifty times as smart as you are, and lived to be a thousand. You squandered it like a brainless fool, and sneered at me for having it to give to you. You made free with everything I owned because you think you've earned it. Well, by God, I'll show you

what you've earned, and what you deserved! From now on you can get a job as a bricklayer or a truck driver."

Riorden swung his son around with a twist of his arm, and propelled him toward the door with a mighty shove. Brian staggered briefly and barely kept himself from falling. But he managed a smile as he straightened the lapels of his coat. "You've done something very stupid, you know." He turned and opened the door, and walked out without a backward glance.

Riorden walked over and kicked the door shut. He came back to the center of the room, and said to Jake, "All right, what did you have on your mind?"

JAKE had watched the scene between father and son with interest, for there was a nagging feeling in his mind that there was an importance in it greater than a conclusive parental explosion.

"All right," Riorden said again. "Did you have something to say?"

Jake said, "Yes, I have," and got his thoughts back in order. "Here it is," he said. "The police have May's diary, and we know there's nothing in it to incriminate you, Riorden. But there has been plenty of gossip about the diary, and the damaging material it is supposed to contain. Our best bet now is to demand that it be produced and examined."

"I don't get it," Riorden said.

"There's no mystery, or even originality in what I'm suggesting," Jake said. "You need a smoke screen, so we'll blow up a beauty. The smoke screen, if you aren't familiar with the term in public relations, is a device whereby you prove that everybody else is a sinner too. You give your audience someone else to boo, and make a fast exit before the bricks start flying."

Riorden rubbed his jaw thoughtfully. "You've seen the diary, I suppose?"

"No." Jake remembered just in time that Martin had told him not to mention receiving it.

"Then how do you know there's no reference to me in it?"

"Lieutenant Martin told me that much. And I'm guessing May's account is on the torrid side and will drag in dozens of prominent people. That, of course, is what we want."

"What good will smearing a lot of other people do for me?" Riorden said, impatiently.

"Let me demonstrate by example what I mean," Jake said. He lit a cigarette and glanced at Sheila. She met his eyes and smiled. "You surprise even me," she said. "I didn't know you had it in you."

"I'm full of surprises," Jake said, and turned away from her. "Think back, Riorden, to a certain Congressional investigation last year, in which one of our most glamorous industrialists was on the spot. Remember?"

"Yes," Riorden said, looking interested. "I remember it."

"Well, here was the point. The industrialist had built a giant submarine with Government money. Some people said the submarine was about as practical as a Rube Goldberg invention. Others said it was all right. The committee wanted to know one way or the other, so they had an investigation. But the damnedest thing happened. The industrialist's bodyguard got on the stand somehow, and began talking about the gala entertaining that had gone on aboard his boss' yacht! The result was that a dozen expensive tarts were called to testify, and they gave the public a Roman festival. They told all about champagne breakfasts and midnight bathing parties at which most of the participants wore nothing but drunken smiles.

"This had nothing much to do with the submarine, of course. But who cared about that, when he could listen to a model tell of being pursued up the rigging of a ship by a drunken satyr? The answer is nobody. The submarine was forgotten. The public had a circus; the committee, I think, had its appropriation cut the next session of Congress.

"Stop babbling," Jake said sharply. "Give me the story."

"Do you understand now? We'll scream for the diary and defy Senator Hampstead and young Prior. We'll go to Washington and drag with us every name mentioned in May's diary."

"A great number of people are going to be hurt," Sheila said.

"That's the beauty of it," Nable said, cheerfully. "You can't tell who's good or bad in a deal like this. Everyone is suspected of being a triple-distilled so-and-so, and that spreads the guilt around. Riorden, your defective barrels won't have a chance if they're competing with sin among the upper classes."

"It's okay," Riorden said, with a grin. "I like it. But how can we get the diary made public?"

"We'll see to that," Jake said, and turned to Niccolo. "Dean, get started right away with items to columnists to the effect that the Government is going to use May's diary in its case against Riorden. And follow that with items that Riorden is demanding that the diary be produced so that his accusers can be shown up as the lying hypocrites they are. Maybe tomorrow we can sell the *Trib* an editorial on it."

"You want it pretty strong, eh?" Dean asked. "Outraged citizen fighting the forces of bureaucracy, eh?"

"That's it."

Jake turned from Niccolo and saw that Sheila was looking at him evenly. They faced each other without speaking when Niccolo joined Nable and Riorden for a drink.

"WELL," Sheila said gently. "You've come up with a master stroke. A real gem. They'll teach this one to kids in public-relations classes."

"It's been done before."

"Yes, I'm sure it has. You know, of course, that some innocent people are going to get kicked right in the teeth. And you know who you're doing it for, and what he is."

Jake didn't answer her for a moment. They seemed alone in the room, in a vacuum into which the clatter of glasses and the conversation didn't penetrate. Somehow he seemed far away from her, and the gulf widened each second he remained silent.

Finally he said: "I know what I'm doing, if that's what you mean."

"I wanted to be sure. . . . Good-by, Jake."

He watched her walk quickly across the room and out the door; and he knew it was a final exit.

Niccolo came over to him. "One thing, Jake: How do you want to handle the fact that the diary was sent to you?"

Jake lit a cigarette. "I don't give much of a damn how you handle that point, Dean," he said. And then: "How did you know it was sent to me, Dean?"

"What do you mean?" Dean said.

"Which word don't you understand?" Jake said. "I asked you how you knew the diary was sent to me. No one knew that but Lieutenant Martin. The only other person who knows who received the diary is the person who sent it to me."

Dean grinned and said: "I've got a big mouth, Jake, but don't let it throw you. I got that information from Toni Ryerston."

"Where did she get it?"

"Her office adjoins yours, remember? She saw you open the package, and I guess she recognized the diary from the descriptions of it in the newspapers. She told me this morning that she *thought* you'd received the diary. When I heard you say you *knew* the police had it, I assumed she had made a correct guess."

"I see," Jake said. "You startled me for a second. Now what did you want?"

"Well, how shall I handle the fact that the cops have May's diary, and that you gave it to them? I mean, isn't that secret information?"

"Just don't mention it then," Jake said. He shrugged and looked directly at Niccolo. "Actually, I don't care what you do."

"I don't get it," Niccolo said, with a puzzled smile.

"It's not important," Jake said. He stared at the door through which Sheila had left, and rubbed a hand tiredly across his forehead. What he'd said to Dean surprised him; it hadn't been deliberate. Yet it expressed perfectly the way he felt about Dean, about Riorden, and about Nable.

The consuming distaste he felt for himself left no room for any interest in anyone else.

He saw himself now as he must have appeared to Sheila, and the view was depressing. The plan he had proposed to Riorden was cheap and ugly; and its execution would require a man of strong stomach and prehensile sensibilities. Himself, in short, he had suggested a shoddy plan of action quickly, instinctively and easily. It just came naturally to him.

NABLE came over with a drink in his hand, a wide relieved smile on his face. "We're in high gear now, Jake. That idea of yours was terrific. I wish I'd thought of it."

"Yes, I wish you had too," Jake said.

Nable lowered his voice slightly. "Riorden's damned pleased."

"That's good." He looked at the door where Sheila had left, and said, almost as an afterthought, "I'm through, Gary, I'm quitting."

"Quitting?'" Nable said. "What do you mean?"

"It's a simple word. You spell it with a '*q*' as in '*queasy.*'"

"Jake, you're talking like an ass. You can't quit now."

"I'm sorry, Gary. I'm not doing this gracefully, I suppose. But I'm fed up, right to the teeth."

Riorden had come up beside them as Jake was speaking. He looked at Nable and then took the cigar from his mouth. "What's the trouble?" he said. "I heard Jake say he's quitting."

"I heard him, too," Nable said, with a touch of panic in his voice. "But he doesn't mean it."

Riorden looked at Jake and said, "Well, how about it? You serious?"

"Yes, I'm quite serious," Jake said.

"Jake, what's got into you?" Nable exploded.

"He's squeamish about working for a thief," Riorden said, with a hard smile.

Jake met Riorden's eyes evenly. "You're putting words in my mouth, but they aren't bad ones. This job smells to high heaven. So I'm clearing out. Good luck."

He picked up his hat and coat and went to the door.

Riorden said, "High moral attitudes are a luxury, you'll find. Only the very rich can afford them."

Jake looked at the three men, Niccolo, Nable and Riorden, all standing with drinks in their hands and regarding him with varying expressions. And it occurred to him then with sudden clearness that he knew a great deal about who had murdered May Laval and Avery Meed.

He smiled and started to answer Riorden, but decided he didn't have the time. Opening the door, he waved a good-by to them and walked briskly to the elevators.

Chapter Seventeen

IFTEEN MINUTES LATER JAKE WAS RINGING Sheila's bell. She opened the door, and when she saw him she tried to close it; but he put a foot inside and pushed his way into the room.

"Please go away," she said, and he saw that she had been crying. She turned from him and sat down on the sofa before the fire. "I meant it. I meant you to go away," she said.

"I've got a little speech to deliver," Jake said. "May I sit down?"

She didn't answer, and from the set of her shoulders he knew she wouldn't. He sat on the arm of the sofa and removed his hat.

"It's just this," he said. "I know why you divorced me, and I know why you're sick of me now. I've changed since we were married. When I met you, I was no prize, admittedly; but I had certain values and certain ideas that I respected. I took people as they came, regardless of their personal, religious or ethical idiosyncrasies, and I didn't want to see anyone get hurt."

He put a cigarette in his mouth, lit it and inhaled deeply. For a moment he watched Sheila in silence, and then shrugged and continued. "But I changed. I can't blame the public-relations business, or anything else, I suppose. But it hit me this afternoon that I was stirring around in a slimy job, and not particularly minding it." He shook his head and tossed his cigarette into the fireplace. "I'm not saying this very well. But I'm fed up. I'm through. I've told Nable that already."

He watched Sheila's still face and the firelight in her hair. He was tired and empty, but it wasn't a bad feeling.

"That's the end of the speech," he said.

"What are you going to do now?" Sheila asked.

"I'm going to tell Martin some things about a couple of murders. After that I'm going to send you a dozen roses and go on relief."

Sheila raised her head slowly, and he saw that she was crying and making no attempt to check the tears.

"Can't you do something about this middle-class emotion?" he said uncomfortably.

"Give me a hanky."

He gave her his handkerchief. "I'm sorry," she said. Then she shook her head. "No, I'm not. I waited for it two years, and it doesn't matter a bit that I'm behaving like a fool."

Jake sat beside her. "Then, in the traditional phrase, it isn't too late?"

Sheila put her hand against his cheek. "The time wasn't important. I just wanted you to wake up. I suppose I'd waited until I was an old hag for that to happen. Maybe I shouldn't say that; it's not good politics. But it's the way I feel, Jake. I love you, you know."

Jake had no urge to be flippant. He simply felt very lucky. "Why didn't you just tell me what you wanted?" he said.

"That wouldn't have been any good. You had to see it yourself and make your own decision, one way or the other. I thought if I left, you might wake up. Anyway, I couldn't bear to be around and watch you changing into a person I didn't know and didn't like."

Jake put his hands on her shoulders and pulled her close to him, and for a moment they didn't do any more talking; then Sheila pushed him away. "That can wait. Right now I want to know what you meant when you said you were going to tell Martin about a couple of murders."

"I've stumbled onto a number of things in the past couple of days," Jake said. "They add up to a pretty good guess as to who killed whom. But I can't fit Niccolo into the picture."

"Niccolo?" Sheila asked.

"You couldn't know about that, I guess. Well, here it is: This afternoon Niccolo asked me how to handle the angle that May's diary had been sent to me. Well, he couldn't have known that I received the diary unless he sent it to me."

"Did you ask him about it?"

"Yes. And he had a nice glib story. He said that Toni Ryerston was sitting at her desk when I unwrapped the diary. She recognized it from the newspaper descriptions, and told Niccolo."

"Well, that's logical enough."

"No, it isn't," Jake said. "Toni's desk and mine are not in line, Sheila. Sitting at her desk, she couldn't see what I was doing at my desk."

"Are you sure?" Sheila asked.

"Pretty sure," Jake said. "But I'm not going to guess about it."

"What do you mean?"

"We're going down to the office and check. You see what it means if Niccolo is lying, don't you?"

"I get it, all right," Sheila said.

She came out of her bedroom five minutes later with fresh makeup on, and her hair tucked under the rim of a small woolen hat.

"I hurried," she said.

"It doesn't show. You look perfect."

"You sound normal again. Cheerful, I mean." She smiled and took his arm. "It's a nice change."

OUTSIDE, snow was falling and darkness had settled thickly and suddenly. They waited on the curb of Lake Shore Drive for a Loop-bound cab while in the opposite lanes four rows of traffic flowed smoothly away from the city, their headlights cutting clear tunnels into the night.

Jake thought about Sheila's comment with a slightly cynical smile. Yes, he had made a change of a sort, and he did feel better.

The thing was, Jake decided, that he probably was made to be a poor newspaper man, instead of a rich philosopher. At any rate, he realized, the days ahead would not be rosy sequences from a grade-B picture.

But he wasn't worried too much about it now.

He was worried about murder. He had a conviction that he could explain the bewildering and violent events that had begun with the murder of May Laval. However, a conviction wasn't enough. He had to put his conviction into an equation that would solve the identity of a clever murderer. Or possibly two. That was enough to worry about at the moment. . . .

The reception-room of the agency was darkened, and the thick carpet muffled their footsteps as they walked across the floor and into the corridor that led to Jake's office. From where they stood they saw a narrow beam of light coming from the open door of the art department; but they heard no sound, and the floor was apparently deserted.

"I'm scared," Sheila said. Jake felt her hand tighten on his arm.

"Don't feel superior about it," he said. "So am I. Let's go."

They walked down the dark corridor, keeping close together and moving quietly and cautiously. Inside his office Jake snapped on the overhead lights, then walked into Toni's office and did the same.

He went behind Toni's desk and looked through the open door to his own office. Sheila said: "She could see your desk, all right. Maybe Niccolo wasn't lying, Jake."

"Something's wrong," Jake said. "Look—sit down in Toni's chair and put your feet on the desk."

He went into his office and sat behind the desk. Sheila called out from Toni's office: "Okay, I'm set."

JAKE turned his head and saw Sheila's slim ankles crossed on the top of Toni's desk. She was wearing black suede pumps with tiny bows over the instep. He could also see her knees where the skirt had pulled up.

He stood up and walked back to Toni's office. Sheila said: "What's wrong, Jake?"

"Somebody is lying, if only on a technicality," he said. "I've used that office for two years, and I know what I'm likely to see when I look around. One of the familiar sights was Toni's ankles. But that was all I saw. Now under the same circumstances I get a view of your legs that is quite a bit more revealing."

Sheila came around to his side. "What does it mean, though?"

Jake didn't answer her; instead he got down on his knees and inspected the legs of the desk. And he found what he had expected to find: The depressions made in the carpet by the legs of the desk were clearly visible; and they were about a foot behind the present position of the desk's legs.

"Somebody moved the desk forward enough to make Niccolo's story check," he said.

"Who?" Sheila asked.

Jake sighed and shook his head. "Hard to say. Let's review the facts: Niccolo made a compromising statement to me this afternoon. He indicated that he knew I'd received the diary. Logically, the only person who would know that would be the person who sent it to me. Right?"

"I knew you received the diary," Sheila said. "Don't forget that, Jake."

"I'm passing you by for the moment," he said. "Getting back to the facts: Niccolo had a plausible explanation for his information. Toni told him about it, he said. However, he said she saw me while she was sitting at her desk. That's impossible. However, it now appears that such a thing is possible, because Toni's desk was moved, and its present position makes Niccolo's story a thing of pristine beauty."

"What are you going to do?"

"We're going calling," Jake said. "I've always wanted to see Toni in her native environment. This seems like a good chance. Come on."

Toni Ryerston lived on the near North Side. The neighborhood had been deteriorating for decades but the progress had been halted, or rather rerouted, during the war, by an influx of single girls who had come from smaller cities to work in Chicago; and by the colony of artists and writers which had sprung up in the area at the same time, apparently attracted by its flavor of *fin de siècle* decay.

Jake paid off their cab and stepped out into the snow before Toni's address, a three-story brownstone apartment building. He found Toni's name halfway down the metal rack and punched the adjacent button. The buzzer sounded; and Jake pushed open the door and followed Sheila up the uncarpeted steps.

A door opened above them, and Toni's voice called, "Who is it?"

Jake said: "Jake and Sheila. Can we see you a minute?"

"Why, sure," Toni said cheerfully.

"Her name will be on the one we want."

She waited for them on the third-floor landing. They exchanged hellos and followed Toni into her one-room apartment, where music by Stravinsky was coming from a record-player, and one glaring unshaded bulb hung from the ceiling.

"How about a drink?" Toni said.

Jake said: "No, thanks. I want to talk to you a moment."

"Why, sure," Toni said again. She looked puzzled. 'Let's sit down, anyway."

There were several wooden chairs in the room, surrounding an immense table on which a portable typewriter was almost lost in a clutter of books and manuscript.

Toni pulled a chair from the table and sat down, with her legs crossed, tailor fashion.

Jake sat on the edge of her work table. "Here's the reason for the visit, Toni," he said. "Yesterday somebody sent me May Laval's diary. Niccolo has told me that you were at your desk when I got it, and recognized the diary from the descriptions of it in the papers. Is that right?"

Toni looked guilty. "Yes, I saw it, Jake."

"And you told Niccolo about it?"

"I—I didn't know I was doing wrong. I've just got a big mouth, I guess."

"There's no reason you shouldn't have told Dean about it," Jake said. "It was just one of those things, and you had a perfect right to mention it to anyone."

"You're making me feel a little better," Toni said. "I thought you were going to tell me I'm a snooping little brat."

"Perish the thought," Jake said. "I'm not going to tell you anything like that. However, I'm going to tell you that you're a stupid little liar, Toni."

"What do you mean?" she cried.

"When did you move the desk?" Jake said evenly.

"I didn't—I don't know when I moved it," Toni said, twisting her hands together.

Jake lit a cigarette, and said mildly: "You're in love with Dean, I suppose."

"Yes."

"You'd like to keep him from getting hurt, then?"

Toni's eyes became enormous. "Yes," she whispered.

"All right, just relax a little bit and listen to me: You can't see my desk from your desk. You couldn't, at least, until yesterday or today. Now, your desk has been moved forward to a spot where it's in line with mine. Coincidentally enough, that move corroborates the story about the diary that Niccolo told me. Curious, isn't it?"

Toni wet her lips. "I—I don't know."

"Dean's in trouble—serious trouble. You aren't doing him any service by keeping quiet. Let's have the story."

Toni looked at Sheila, then back at Jake. "Dean called me yesterday afternoon," she said in a low, hesitant voice. "He asked me to tell you I'd seen you get the diary."

"What time was that?"

"I don't know. He was at Mr. Riorden's apartment, though."

Jake thought that Niccolo hadn't wasted any time correcting his slip about the diary.

"Go on," Jake said.

"Dean sounded upset," Toni said. "He said if you asked me had I seen you get the diary, that I was to say yes. And I was also to tell you that I'd told him about it. Then he asked me if I could see your desk when I was sitting at my own. I said no. For a few seconds he didn't say anything. Then he told me to move my desk up enough so that it was in line with yours."

"And you did, of course?"

"Yes."

"Anything else?"

"No. I asked him why he wanted me to lie for him, but he just said, 'Why not?' and hung up."

Jake said to Toni: "Do you have a phone?"

Surprisingly, she had. It was on a piano stool in the closet. Jake picked up the receiver and gave the operator Niccolo's number. Toni was beginning to cry. "He'll hate me," she said.

"I don't think so," Jake said.

The phone on the other end was lifted. Jake's hand tightened on the receiver.

"Yes?" It was Niccolo's voice, low and guarded.

"Dean, this is Jake."

There was silence. Then Niccolo said: "What's on your mind?"

"I'm at Toni's. Let's don't waste time. She told me the whole story."

Dean was silent, and Jake said: "Are you still there?"

"I didn't bolt for the door," Niccolo said. His voice was tired. "Where are you now?"

"At Toni's."

"Well, do me a favor. I shouldn't have dragged her into this mess, but I was desperate. Tell her for me she's a good kid, and that I'm sorry. Will you do that?"

"I'll do that," Jake said. "Now let's come to the point: How did you know I received May's diary?"

"I sent it to you," Niccolo said. "I wrapped it with brown paper, put your name on it, and dropped it into a mail-box. That's how I knew you got it, Jake."

Jake felt perspiration starting on his forehead. He said:

"Where did you get it, Dean?"

"I got it from Avery Meed, Riorden's little batman. I killed Meed, Jake. I killed him and took the diary. Does that shock you?"

"You're crazy. Don't talk any more. I'll come over and we'll go over this thing. Will you wait there for me, Dean?"

"Sorry, Jake. Thanks, but I have other plans. I need a half-hour's start. How about a half-hour for auld lang syne? Have a drink, smoke a couple of cigarettes before you call the police, eh, Jake?"

"I won't give you thirty seconds unless you listen to me. Why did you do it, Dean?"

Niccolo chuckled, and Jake could imagine the light in his eye and the cynical good humor of his strong and handsome face. "I have a sordid story in the balcony, doctor," Niccolo said. "Jake, I killed Meed because I'm a smart operator."

"Stop this neurotic babbling," Jake said sharply. "Give me the story."

Toni had come closer to the phone.

"He's in trouble, isn't he?" she said in an anguished whisper. Sheila put an arm around her shoulder and held her close.

"Okay," Niccolo said, quietly. "I'll give it to you, Jake. But in exchange for that half-hour. Is it a deal?"

"Go ahead."

"Here it is then: I needed money, Jake. I like the horses but they didn't like me. I got in deep with some characters who weren't interested in excuses or good intentions. Remember our first conference with Riorden? He said that May Laval had some dope on him. I was in a straw-grabbing mood, so I decided to see May. I hoped to talk her into joining me in a deal to pry Riorden loose from some of his cash. Blackmail is the traditional word, I guess. Still interested?"

"Yes."

"Fine. I went to May's the morning she was murdered. But I was too late. A little man—I learned later he was Avery Meed—was going up the steps of her house. He went in and came out not more than a minute later, with a flat book under his arm. I didn't get the pitch. Anyway, I lost my nerve. I went home, but the next morning I met Meed in your office. By that time I knew that May had been murdered, and that the diary was missing. So I reasoned that Meed had killed May and taken the diary. The rest was pretty simple. I followed him when he left the office—you wanted me that morning, but I was gone, remember? Anyway, I talked to Meed in his apartment. He had an appointment with Riorden and he didn't have much time. Neither did I, Jake. I told him what I knew, and gave him an opportunity to join my little deal. But he turned it down. More than that, he reached for a phone to call the police. He must have been bluffing, but I couldn't take a chance. I jumped him and took the diary. Later that morning, I clipped the information in it that pertained to Riorden, and sent the rest of the diary to you."

"Do you still have the dope on Riorden?"

"Yes," Niccolo said, and laughed. "It's plenty hot, Jake. But it didn't do me any good. I sent you the diary because I hoped you'd tell Riorden. I thought it might put a little psychological pressure on him to know that the dirt had got into someone else's hands. But I'm a bad guesser. I called Riorden the next night and made him a proposition. He told me to go to hell and hung up. And that's just half of it. Tonight I called that character Prior, the Government man. I offered him the dope on Riorden for a price, and he told me to go to hell too. Funny, isn't it?"

"Dean, you can't help yourself by running now. You'd better face this thing."

"You promised me a half-hour, remember?"

"You'll get the half hour," Jake said.

"Okay. We'll see how far I can get. I have plans, but I don't honestly expect them to work. I'm kind of disappointed in myself, Jake. Take it easy."

The phone clicked in Jake's ear. He jiggled the hook automatically; then he shrugged and put the receiver back into place.

"What did he do?" Toni whispered.

Jake looked at her for a moment without speaking. Then he said: "He killed Avery Meed."

Toni frowned as if the words had no meaning for her, and then she sat down in a straight chair and began to rub her forehead.

"That's not—Dean couldn't do that," she said, in a puzzled, reasonable voice, and started to cry.

Sheila came to Jake's side, and he put his arm around her shoulder. "He wants me to wait half an hour before calling the police," he said.

"I see. Do you have a cigarette?"

They lit cigarettes, and Jake glanced at his watch.

"Damn it," he said. . . .

Fifteen minutes passed. Toni had stopped crying. She stared at Jake now in a beseeching silence, as if begging him to tell her nothing was wrong. . . .

The half-hour passed.

Jake picked up the phone and called the police board. He asked for Homicide. The sergeant on duty switched his call to Lieutenant Martin's office.

"Yes?" Martin said crisply.

"This is Jake. I've got some news for you."

"Fine. What is it?"

Jake heard Toni crying again, and he let out his breath wearily. "I've got the man who killed Avery Meed. All wrapped up in a fancy package."

"Who've you got?" Martin said, his voice quickening with interest.

"Dean Niccolo."

Martin was silent for several seconds. Then he said, in a thoughtful voice: "That's funny, Jake; Dean Niccolo was murdered in his apartment about fifteen minutes ago. We're just going out there."

Chapter Eighteen

Jake left Sheila with Toni and caught a cab for the North Side. He knew the patrolman who was standing inside the lobby of Niccolo's building. He told him that Martin was expecting him and went up to the third floor landing, where the Lieutenant was talking with a detective from the district.

They nodded to each other, and Martin led him into Niccolo's apartment.

Niccolo's tweed-clad body lay on a grass rug in the center of the large, high-ceilinged living-room. His face was buried in the crook of his arm, and except for the blood on his cheek he might have been asleep. The blood came from a wound in his temple and had stained his thick black hair.

"It was at close range," Martin said. "Probably a .32. Now what was this about his killing Meed?"

Jake looked away from Dean's huddled figure. "That was his story," he said. "He made a slip, you see, talking with me about the diary. He said something that indicated he knew I'd received it. When I called him on it, he gave me a song-and-dance about getting the information from Toni Ryerston, whose office adjoins mine."

Martin held up a hand irritably. "Let's go slow, Jake. You seem to be running over with information."

"Okay," Jake said. He started again and told Martin every detail of his conversation with Dean Niccolo, and of his interview with Toni Ryerston, and Dean's original mistake. When he finished, Martin scowled and ran a hand abstractedly through his thinning brown hair.

"So he killed Meed, eh? That leaves May and himself for us to figure out, doesn't it?"

Without waiting for an answer he drifted away and began talking with a detective who was dusting the arms of the light maple chairs for prints.

Jake glanced around the smartly furnished room. Niccolo had enjoyed the good things of life. Several of the pictures had been pulled down from the wall, he noticed, and the drawers of a small desk had been removed and their contents dumped on the floor.

Martin walked back to Jake, massaging the bridge of his nose thoughtfully, and Jake said: "Did your men make the search here?"

"No. This is just the way we found it. Someone made a quick search after letting him have it, I'd say."

"Any ideas?" Jake said.

"No, I wouldn't go that far," Martin said. He looked at Jake with an odd expression. "You got any ideas?"

"As a matter of fact, yes," Jake said. "Supposing Avery Meed killed May to get the diary? Logical?"

"Reasonably so. We've found Meed's prints on the table where May kept the diary. He had a motive, opportunity, and so forth. Yeah, it's logical."

"How about those double crosses drawn on the mirror with lipstick and the clothes of May's that were strewn about, and so forth? Do you think Meed did all that?"

Martin shook his head. "You said Niccolo said he was outside May's when Meed went in. Well, according to Niccolo, Meed was only inside a minute. That wouldn't have given him time to talk the deal over with May, murder her, tear up her clothes, draw on the mirror with lipstick, and so forth. That would take ten or fifteen minutes." Martin lit a cigarette deliberately and blew smoke at the ceiling. "Maybe Niccolo was wrong about the time?"

"I'm betting he wasn't," Jake said. "Niccolo had been in radio quite a while before coming with us. He could look at a page of copy and tell how long it would take to read it over the air. I'd say he'd make a good witness."

"You're saying that Meed didn't murder May. That he couldn't possibly have."

"No, you're saying that," Jake said.

A FLICKER of annoyance crossed Martin's face and he said, sardonically: "How long are you going to keep me in suspense, Jake? Do you know anything I can use?"

"I honestly don't know," Jake said. "I'll try, though. Do you know that Riorden's wife, Denise, and young Brian have been two-timing the old man with gay indifference, so to speak?"

"I've known from the start," Martin said.

Jake shrugged. "Well, you're ahead of me."

"I know that Dan Riorden didn't spend the night of May's murder in Gary," Martin said. "I know a helluva lot, Jake. I know that your boss, Gary Nable, has lied to me about what he did the night of the murder. I wonder if anyone is telling the truth."

"How about Mike Locarno?" Jake said, with a smile.

"I know all about Mike Locarno," Martin snapped. He dropped his cigarette and put his foot on it heavily; and then he looked at Jake with embarrassment. "I'm sorry," he said. "I can't make things add up in this case. It's got me edgy."

A uniformed patrolman who had been going through a shelf of books came over to Martin with an envelope in his hand. "I just found this behind a row of books, Lieutenant."

Martin took the envelope from him, opened it and removed a sheaf of clippings. He opened them and Jake saw that they were covered with May's back-slanted script.

"This is damned interesting," Martin said.

The clippings were obviously those that had been cut from May's diary; and Jake, as he read over Martin's shoulder saw why Riorden had been worried.

The clippings contained the story of his wartime jugglings, not in elaborate detail, but in implications, scraps of conversations, and forthright opinions by May, of Riorden's activities. There were facts, figures and dates, all adding up to a pretty clear picture of how Riorden had cheated the Government through the substitution of cheap grade steel, and of how he had bribed the inspector, Nickerson, to okay the faulty barrels.

"Looks like this Riorden is quite a fellow," Martin said, and looked at Jake coldly. "You enjoy working for him?"

"I didn't, so I quit," Jake said.

"Well," Martin said, and cleared his throat noisily. "I seem to make an ass of myself every time I get away from murders."

"Forget it," Jake said. "Does this information give you a lead?"

"An obvious one. Who would want this information hushed up? Riorden."

"Tell me this," Jake said. "Did you ever find any additional diary of May's?"

"Now you're getting smart. That was the first thing I looked for when she was murdered. You see, the diary we recovered ran up until the end of 1948, and this is more than a year later. People usually don't give up the diary habit, once they start. When they do, it's a lead-pipe cinch they wouldn't stop on the last day of the year. That's psychology, in case you're wondering how I know. New Year's Day is the time to start a diary because it's an exciting day, it's a fresh start in life. So when I saw that her diary ended on December 31, 1948, I made a little bet that we'd find some further record of her day-to-day routine."

"Well, did you?" Jake said impatiently.

"Oh, yes," Martin said. He lit a cigarette and said casually: "Yes, we found it, all right. May had stopped keeping a written diary at the end of 1948. From then on she had her material typed. We found a bundle of typewritten pages in her bedroom, hidden away in a little closet behind her shoe rack."

"What do you mean, she had her material typed?" Jake said. "Did she use a secretary?"

"No, a dictaphone. And it was empty when we arrived. Either she hadn't been working, or the cylinder had been taken away."

Martin excused himself to talk with a district sergeant, and Jake wandered to the window and stared down into the snow-blurred street. Everything was coming into shape now, the pattern was taking form. He turned and went back to Martin.

"I've got an idea," he said. "Lend me one of your men for a half-hour or so, and I may surprise you."

"You haven't asked if there was anything interesting in May's new diary?" Martin said.

"I know damn' well there wasn't," Jake said.

"I'm going to arrest Riorden," Martin said. "Does that interest you?"

"Yes and no. Well?"

Martin nodded to a detective from Homicide, a man named Murphy.

"Go along with Jake, Murph," he said. "He may need some help. When you're through with him, check back to Headquarters."

"I'll see you in an hour," Jake said.

"You're going to miss the show," Martin said.

"Maybe not," Jake said. "Come on, Murph."

Downstairs Murphy crawled into his car and said, "Where to, Jake?"

"Find a drugstore, first. I've got to make a call."

Leaving Murphy in the car, Jake went into the warm, sweetly-scented drugstore and in a telephone booth leafed through the city directory in search of the name of May's maid, Ada Swenson. Jake wasn't sure she had a phone. But she was listed in the book, to his relief.

THEN as he dialed her number he went quickly back over the chain of reasoning that had led him to her.

First, May was using a dictaphone. He shouldn't have needed Martin to tell him that. She had said she was going to work the night he had seen her for the last time, and she had said there were no servants in the house at night, because she didn't like them *eavesdropping* on her. If she had been using a typewriter or pen or pencil, she wouldn't have had that worry. Therefore she was dictating. That much was fine. But she had intended to work that night—yet the police had not found a cylinder in her dictaphone.

If she had worked, there should have been a dictaphone cylinder in her machine the next morning, unless —it had been taken away by her murderer, or had been mailed away by her maid, Ada Swenson. The woman had told Martin she had mailed a package before discovering May's body. That last alternative had all of Jake's hopes pinned to it.

"Hello?"

Jake recognized her soft, anxious voice. "Miss Swenson, this is Lieutenant Martin," he said. "Can I talk to you a moment?"

"Why—yes."

"I'd like you to tell me again what you did the morning of Miss Laval's murder. Everything, please."

"Oh, it was terrible," Miss Swenson said, her voice rising. "She was laying on the bed, and I said, 'Good morning' and she didn't answer, and she was dead all the time, and the police came, and found her throat had been strangled, and I—"

"Now, don't upset yourself, Miss Swenson," Jake said. "What did you do when you entered the house? Immediately after you unlocked the door, what did you do?"

"I closed it," Miss Swenson said.

"Yes. And then what?"

"Oh!" Miss Swenson cried. "I forget. I forget the mail. I took the mail out and then came back and found her there."

Jake's hand tightened on the receiver. "What was it you mailed, Miss Swenson?"

"Like always. First thing she want me take out the little package and drop it in the box. She left it for me at night, and I mail it in the mail box. Sometimes she leave two or three, but they should go out first, before the dusting. Always to the Autowrite Company, by special delivery."

Jake let out his breath slowly. "Thanks, Miss Swenson, thanks very much," he said.

"Good night. And do you know will anybody else want to know about this? I am leaving soon for sister's, but with you and the other fellow calling me, maybe I should plan to leave not right away."

"Did someone else call you about this?" Jake said.

"Oh, yes. Not an hour ago. He wanted to know just like you what I did, and about the mail. I almost forgot about the mail to him too, I'm so nervous."

"Who was it called?" Jake said.

"I don't know."

"Well, I don't think you'll be bothered again tonight," Jake said. He replaced the receiver and stared at it for a moment; someone else was thinking along the same line that he was, and that "someone" now knew as much as he did.

He flipped quickly through the phone book again, found the address he wanted and rejoined Murphy in the car. "We're going downtown," he said. "The Science Building."

The revolving door of the Science Building was locked, but Murphy hammered on the glass until he roused the janitor, a shuffling old man with gray hair.

Murphy showed his badge to the janitor through the glass, and they were admitted. Jake asked what floor the Autowrite Company was on, and the janitor said the thirteenth.

"Let's go up," Jake said.

The Autowrite Company occupied a three-room suite with an entrance several doors down from the elevators. Murphy told the janitor to unlock the door and Jake walked into the office and snapped on the lights, while Murphy watched him curiously.

Jake went to the filing cabinets and looked through the index for May's account with the company. He found a card with her name on it, listing the dates when recordings were received and when the typed material was returned to her. The last entry showing the receipt of a recording was the day after May's murder. There was no record that the material had been returned, and Jake began to feel excited. He was still on the right track, so far.

There remained now the job of finding the cylinder that contained May's record of what happened the last night she was alive.

There were three desks in the outer office, and on each there was a wire basket filled with the black dictaphone cylinders.

Jake beckoned to Murphy. "You can give me a hand here. I'm looking for a recording made by May Laval." He picked up a cylinder from the desk and saw that it had a tag attached to it, and on the tag a printed name. "Her name will be on the one we want." He put the first cylinder aside, and started through the pile, while Murphy applied himself with an impressive disinterest to the stack on the middle desk.

The janitor watched them with gloomy suspicion.

Murphy found the recording.

Jake grabbed it eagerly and slipped it into the player alongside the desk, put the phones to his ears, and flicked the switch to start the machine. . . .

He listened for two minutes, and then he said, "Well, I'll be damned!" in an astonished voice. And yet he wasn't surprised.

"What's up?" Murphy asked.

Jake took the phones from his ears and removed the cylinder from the player. "There's no time to go into it now, Murph. But here's what I want you to do. I need this recording and a portable dictaphone at Riorden's suite in the Blackstone Hotel in about an hour. Can you handle that?"

"Yeah, we've got a couple of portables at Headquarters. You want one of them, and this cylinder, too?"

"Yes, and for God's sake, don't let anything happen to the record."

"I'll take care of it," Murphy said laconically, and dropped it into his outside coat pocket.

"Hey!" the janitor said. "You can't take things out of here."

"I'll leave a receipt," Jake said, and sat down at a typewriter. He rattled one off and signed Lieutenant Martin's name to it with a flourish.

"Well, that's different," the janitor said.

Murphy drove Jake down to the Blackstone, and then drove on to Headquarters to get the portable dictaphone.

There was a crowd under the marquee waiting for cabs, and the rain-coated doorman was in the street, blowing his whistle at passing cabs with pointless optimism.

Jake elbowed his way through the press of people and trotted up the steps to the lobby. He started for the elevators but saw Martin and Gregory Prior standing at the desk talking to the room clerk. Changing direction, he came up behind them and tapped Martin on the shoulder.

Martin turned, and his face was hard. "We're too late. Riorden checked out an hour ago. The clerk tells us he had a ticket on the TWA flight to the coast."

"What flight?"

"The ten-thirty-five. We can catch him at the airport."

Prior nodded to Jake. "I've got a car outside," he said to Martin. Prior was hatless, and there were drops of rain in his close-cropped hair. "I've got an interest in Riorden, too, you know."

"Well, let's go," Martin said. "We can both take a crack at him, but not until we get him."

They started for the door, and Jake had to hurry to keep up with Martin's long, determined strides. They pushed through the revolving door as a cab pulled up at the hotel.

The occupant struggled through the cluster of people who were trying to engage the cab; and Jake saw that it was Sheila.

"I hoped you'd be here," she said. "I gave Toni a sleeping-powder and she's all right. What's going on?"

Prior cleared his throat. "We've got to hurry."

Jake said to Martin, "Can I bring her along?"

"Sure, bring her along," Martin said.

Prior's car was halfway down the block. They were soaking wet when they climbed in, Jake and Sheila in the rear, Martin and Prior up front. Prior drove over to Archer Avenue, the diagonal artery leading to Municipal Airport.

"What's going on?" Sheila said.

"Dan Riorden has flown the coop. Wasn't that a damn' foolish thing for him to do, Prior?"

"He knew we had him," Prior said, rubbing a gloved hand over the windshield and leaning forward over the wheel for better visibility. "Possibly he figured he'd be better off trying to get out of the country with as much cash as he could raise. He might manage to stay at liberty quite some time, say in South America."

Prior drove expertly. They reached the airport at ten-thirty-four.

Martin was out of the car before Prior brought it to a complete stop.

There was a restless stir of movement in the large, brightly-lighted waiting-room, as passengers streamed out the doors leading to the field, and redcaps trundled luggage after them in four-wheeled trucks. The monotonous, weary voice of the announcer describing flights and weather in other sections of the country lent a charged excitement to the atmosphere.

Martin made straight for the information desk.

"The ten thirty-five is ready to take off now, sir," the clerk said, answering his question. "I'm afraid you're late."

Martin drew his wallet and showed the clerk his badge. "We may have to hold that flight," he said.

"Oh." The clerk raised his eyebrows. "I'll try to contact the dispatcher. Will you need any help?"

"I don't think so," Martin said.

Prior came in, spotted them and hurried over. "Everything okay?"

Martin nodded. "Let's go."

He led the way to the field, with Prior and Jake at his side.

Outside, the night was changed to brilliant whiteness by the rows of beacons lining the runway.

Prior suddenly grabbed Martin's arm. "Look!" They all stopped and watched the gleaming four-engined plane hurtling down the runway. It drove into the opaque mist of rain, finally cleared the ground and faded almost imperceptibly into the horizon, its blinking wing lights flashing like fireflies in the dark.

"Well," Jake said, "that was a nice exit."

"He won't get far," Martin said. "He should know that."

They drove back to the Loop after Martin had dispatched a wire to police in Kansas City asking them to take Riorden into custody. Martin said he wanted them to come with him to Riorden's apartment.

"WHAT kind of a warrant do you have for him?" he asked Prior a little later.

"We don't have a warrant yet, and we don't need one, unless he refuses to coöperate. First, he'll have a hearing before the committee, which has the authority to subpœna any persons or records it requires."

"You're pretty sure of your case?"

"I'd rather wait a little, but the Senator has the bit in his teeth."

No one talked for a while after that, and they drove toward the city with nothing but the lashing rain and wind against the car to break the silence.

Finally Prior said: "Why do you want to go back to Riorden's apartment?"

"There are still some odds and ends," Martin said shortly.

When they reached the Blackstone, Martin said to Prior: "Take Sheila into the lobby and wait for us, will you? I want to talk to Jake a second."

"Alone at last," Jake said, as Prior and Sheila hurried across the sidewalk and up the steps to the lobby. "What's on your mind?"

Martin turned and rested his arm on the back of the front seat. He drew on his cigarette and the tiny flare of light revealed the smile on his face.

"What did you find at the Autowrite place?" he said mildly.

Jake was reaching for a cigarette, but his hand stopped in midair. "You son of a gun!" he grinned. "You made an errand boy out of me."

"Yeah, that's right. I knew what you were thinking, so I saved myself the trip. You see, there were only three things could have happened to May's last record: One, it would be in her home. Two, the murderer would take it with him. Three, it would be at the Autowrite place getting typed."

"You called Miss Swenson, then?"

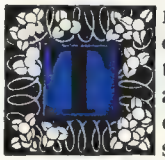
"Sure. I knew you would too, and that you'd go down there and look around. No point in both of us working."

"You want to hear about it?"

"Not particularly," Martin said. "We have to force this thing. I'm asking a lot, Jake. I know how you've been thinking, and where it's led you. Our theories may support one another. If you'll start things rolling, we can wind this up tonight."

"All right," Jake said. "Anything to get out of this rain."

Chapter Nineteen



THE POLICEMAN WHO MET THEM AT THE DOOR of the Riorden suite made a warning gesture with his hands. Jake looked past him and saw Denise sitting in an overstuffed chair. She was crying, and Brian was beside her, patting her arm.

"What's all this?" Martin said.

"She learned that her husband took a powder, I think," the patrolman said.

Martin removed his hat and smoothed down his thin hair. Prior and Sheila sat down inconspicuously on a sofa while Jake lit a cigarette and walked to the fireplace, where a small wood fire was burning. He turned his back to the heat gratefully.

Martin looked down at Denise.

"We've got a few things to clear up, Mrs. Riorden. I'll try to be as quick as possible."

Denise continued to cry, and despite the solemnity of the scene the thought occurred to Jake that she would get a great deal of sympathy during Riorden's trial. She was wearing a black dress with sequins and the firelight played interestingly over her smooth tanned legs and gracefully molded ankles. Denise, Jake guessed, would do all right.

Brian said to Martin: "This is a helluva time to be barging in. Can't it wait until tomorrow?"

"No, it can't wait until tomorrow," Martin said.

"Okay, let's get it over with then," Brian said coldly.

A loud peremptory knock sounded, and every head turned sharply. Martin stepped over and opened the door.

Gary Nable and Toni stood in the corridor.

"Come in," Martin said.

Martin closed the door behind them, and Nable glanced around the room uncertainly. "What the devil is going on?" he said. "Toni called me and said Niccolo was in some kind of trouble. What's going on? Where's Riorden?"

"Dean Niccolo was murdered this evening," Martin said. "Dan Riorden has blown out of town. Is all this news to you, Mr. Nable?"

"Good God!" Nable said.

Toni Ryerston turned frantically to Jake, and when he looked away from her, she took a backward step. "I knew he was in trouble, but I didn't know he was dead," she said. "It didn't matter that he was in trouble. I thought—" She stopped speaking and sat down carefully in a straight-backed chair.

Nable patted her shoulder and said to Martin, "This is terrible."

"Yes, it is," Martin said.

EVERYONE was watching him expectantly now. He stood in the middle of the room, his eyes touching everyone present in turn.

"All right," Brian said savagely. "What we waiting for?"

Martin glanced at him calmly, then walked over and sat down beside Prior.

"Jake has something to tell us," he said in a conversational voice. "I think you'll find it interesting. Go ahead, Jake."

Jake faced the semicircle of puzzled faces with what he hoped was a confident expression, and tried to escape the feeling that he was as out of place as a thumbscrew in a psychiatrist's office.

"I'm going to talk about three murders," he said. "The heart of this matter is, or was, May Laval, a gay and exciting woman whom we all knew. May made the mistake of deciding to publish her memoirs, the details of which were embarrassing and distressing to a number of important people. This is not the time to examine her motives for doing this, because the real reasons will probably never be known. Anyway, she started her project, and was immediately marked to die.

"One gentleman who didn't want his wartime activities put on the best-seller lists was Dan Riorden. He therefore sent his dog-robber, Avery Meed, to cajole May out of writing a book. Riorden's offer consisted of straight, beautiful cash. But, and this is important, when Meed arrived at May Laval's home, May was already dead. She had been strangled before he got there.

"Meed may have been shocked by this fact, but he was well-trained enough to go on with his orders. He found the diary and took it to his hotel room.

"Now," Jake continued, "we come to an unlikely development. I mean Dean Niccolo. The pitch was consistent with Dean's behavior pattern, I suppose. And parenthetically, everyone in this mess behaved with deplorable unoriginality. Everybody followed his characteristic bent religiously. Had anyone crossed us up by seeking peace of mind, or knowledge, or the love of a pure woman, we'd have been lost. But everybody behaved predictably; everybody wanted something for nothing.

"So, to get back to Dean Niccolo. He had been gambling. He got seriously into debt, and needed funds in a hurry. He knew that May Laval had something on Riorden, so he decided to try and get hold of it, the object of course being blackmail. Therefore he went to May's home, arriving there just as Avery Meed was making his entrance. He watched Meed go inside and come out half a minute later with a book under his arm.

"Niccolo lost his nerve. He left. But the same morning he met Meed in my office, and learned that he worked for Riorden. Niccolo knew then from the papers that May had been killed and her diary stolen, so he guessed that Meed had done both jobs. He trailed Meed from our office to his apartment and made a proposition. But Meed was constitutionally unable to rebel against his orders, and so he refused Niccolo's offer. That is why he died. Niccolo killed him and got hold of the diary.

"Now," Jake said, "we come to the end of Act One. Is everyone following me so far?"

"How much more of this do we have to listen to?" Brian asked Martin.

Prior straightened Brian with a right to the jaw.

"Just until he's through," Martin said.

"I'm going to get more interesting from now on," Jake said, with a glance at Brian. "But let's not leave Niccolo quite so abruptly. One thing ruined his plan. Prior, here, had already discovered Riorden's wartime frauds—the frauds revealed in the diary. Thus, Prior knocked Niccolo out of a sale. Riorden wasn't interested in suppressing information at a fat figure, when the same dope was already in the Government's hands. Thus when Niccolo called Riorden to make a sale, he was told to go to hell. Riorden knew Prior had the dope on him, because Prior had told me, and I, in turn, had told Riorden.

"That's enough background, I think. It's time to be vulgar and start pointing."

Jake put out his cigarette and lit another. He glanced around the room, and said: "Here's the way it could have happened, of course, with names and everything."

He turned to Brian and Denise.

"How long has your affair been going on?"

Denise said: "That's a fine thing to say."

"I know," Jake said. "But it's important to my theory." He glanced at Brian. "Do you have something melodramatic to say, or would you prefer to answer the question?"

Brian said coolly: "You're getting in nice and deep, my friend. Go ahead."

"Why, thanks. Your father knew about the affair you'd been having with Denise, of course. Denise, who is majestically indiscreet when tight, let your father in on your secret."

"That's a lie," Denise said.

JAKE smiled. "Hardly! Remember the afternoon you and I had a few drinks? We came back here, and Riorden entered a few moments later. You were lying on the couch, and very drunk. He told you to get to your room—whereupon you began to entreat him to take you up to the lodge *again*—a place you'd never been with Riorden. You said as much the first night I met you in Nable's office. Riorden then learned that you had been up to the lodge, and reasoned thus: you'd been to the lodge; *ergo,* it must have been with Brian."

"I won't listen to any more of this," Brian shouted.

"When your father realized that you were two-timing him with his wife, he kicked you out," Jake said calmly. "He'd taken quite a beating from you, Brian. He listened to your cynical moralizing about the war, and watched you posturing absurdly as the bitter, maladjusted war hero. Why he did, is something a psychiatrist might tell us. But he drew the line at allowing you to play around with Denise."

Brian shrugged and lit a cigarette. "You're being awfully wordy about it. We had a disagreement, and he blew his top, that's all."

"There's a little more to it than that. What did you do when you realized that the golden eggs weren't going to be laid any more?"

"Oh, that's your story," Brian said with a smile.

"Okay. When you were tossed out of your mink-lined nest, you started thinking how you could clip him for some money." Jake stopped and turned casually to Denise. "Remember, Denise, when you told me about your habit of listening in on the extension phone in your bedroom?"

DENISE glanced uncertainly at Brian, and then said: "I may have mentioned it. It's hardly a crime."

"Well, that depends. Dean Niccolo made a call from here this afternoon. He called a girl named Toni Ryerston, who is sitting with us now. Did that conversation surprise you?"

"Don't say anything!" Brian said. "That's none of his damned business."

"Yes, you'd better be extremely careful now," Jake said. "Dean called Toni to ask her to help him out of an embarrassing spot. Dean talked too much to me—he mentioned knowing that I'd received May's diary—and he had to have an alibi. You see, he had sent me the diary, after killing Meed. The police could have used that information, Denise. Why didn't you go to them?"

"I didn't know what the devil he was talking about," Denise said, standing and facing him excitedly. "It didn't make any sense to me."

"Shut up," Brian said.

"Damn it," Denise said, wheeling on him, "I'm tired of being shouted at. I couldn't make any sense out of it, and neither could you."

Jake said: "So you told Brian about the call, eh? And Brian was confused and bewildered?"

"She told me about a conversation she'd overheard between Niccolo and some girl," Brian said tensely. "Do what you can with that."

"I'm going to try. You knew from that conversation that Niccolo had sent me the diary. That meant that Niccolo had clipped the stuff pertaining to your father from the diary and still had it in his possession—since I told your father, in your presence, remember, that the diary received had no reference to him in it. You knew that Niccolo had the goods on your father. And you wanted a way to make your father start laying those golden eggs again, didn't you? So you thought of blackmail."

Brian pushed a lock of hair from his forehead and attempted a smile. It was not a success.

He said: "Supposing you say what you mean in simple blunt language."

"Fine," Jake said. "I'm suggesting that you might have gone to Niccolo's tonight, after learning he had the something on your father, and that you blew his brains out when he wouldn't come across with the clippings. Didn't you?"

Brian shook his head. "No," he said.

Lieutenant Martin got up slowly and rubbed the back of his head with his left hand. "You took a drive out toward Niccolo's apartment tonight, didn't you?" he said, in a mild voice.

Brian turned to him with a startled expression. "You're not taking this pipe dream seriously, are you?"

"Oh, very seriously," Lieutenant Martin said.

"You can't be," Brian cried. "You're trying to pin this on me to frame me, that's all."

Denise had been watching him tensely since Martin had spoken; and now she suddenly took a step back and put a hand to her mouth. "You killed him," she whispered. "You simple fool! I told you—"

Brian turned and slapped her across the mouth with his open hand.

"You simply won't keep quiet, will you?" he said coolly.

"That's enough of the dramatics," Martin said. He looked at Jake thoughtfully for a second, a worried line above his eyes; then he shrugged. "Okay," he said to Brian. "Let's go."

The words seemed to act as a spur to Brian. He lunged forward suddenly and hurled Martin aside, then broke for the door.

But he didn't get far. Prior came out of his chair with astonishing speed, caught him by the shoulder and spun him round; and before Brian regained his balance, Prior straightened him with a savage right to the jaw. Brian's eyes glazed over as he started to fall; and Prior's next punch, a professionally expert left hook, dropped him to the floor unconscious.

A uniformed policeman stepped quickly over his prostrate body and caught Denise by the arms as she started for the door.

"That was neat work," Martin said to Prior. He brushed his hair down. "He caught me by surprise."

"Well, you were busy talking, and I had a better chance to watch," Prior said. "I saw it coming."

Sheila slipped over to Jake. "You were wonderful," she said. "Now can we get out of here?"

"Oh, sure," Jake said, and looked at Martin, who was scratching his ear and frowning somberly. "We'll clear out right away. But first we've got to settle something."

He paused and glanced around the room.

"You see, Brian *didn't* murder Niccolo. The emotional difficulties in the Riorden family had nothing to do with that murder—or May's.

"The fact that Denise overheard a conversation, that Dan Riorden absconded, and that Brian and Denise engaged in an affair had nothing to do with Niccolo's murder—or May's. But they all formed a neat and logical pattern. The person who had murdered May Laval and Dean Niccolo was quite obvious for some time. I outlined a case against Brian and Denise just to show you all how misleading those developments were. And of course I had to show off a little, too."

"Well?" Martin demanded.

"Oh, yes," Jake said. He turned and glanced at another person in the room. "How about it, Prior? Shall I tell the story, or will you?"

Prior started. He stared at Jake for several seconds and then smoothed his closely cropped hair with an absent gesture and smiled slightly. "Now what do you mean by that, Jake?"

"I mean that you murdered May Laval and Dean Niccolo," Jake said, easily. "Would you like to hear the details?"

Prior lit a cigarette and smiled again, and then he said, "Well, I guess you'd better explain yourself," in a puzzled but unworried voice.

Chapter Twenty

PRIOR LIT THE CIGARETTE HE HAD IN HIS MOUTH and dropped the lighter into his vest pocket. "Jake, I hope you know what you're doing," he said.

"Don't worry," Jake said. "I know precisely what I'm doing. You murdered May because you feared the details of your long-ago affair with her might become public knowledge."

He smiled without humor as color mounted suddenly in Prior's face.

"Offhand," Jake said, "I can't think of a more embarrassing development in the career of a shining knight from the Hampstead Committee."

Prior stared at Jake unseeingly and then put a hand to his forehead and sat down stiffly, like someone who had received without a warning a piece of shocking news.

Jake glanced at Martin, who nodded with finality.

"Yes," Jake said. "That does it, I think."

"But go on," Martin said. "I'd like to hear it all."

"Okay," Jake said, and lit a cigarette. He sat on the arm of an overstuffed chair, and took Sheila's hand. She squeezed his fingers with quick, intimate pressure, and he smiled at her before glancing back to Martin.

"The big thing, of course, was this: Prior came to me and said he had evidence of Riorden's wartime peculations—evidence he claimed to have gotten from the Riorden Company's official books and records. Prior had the details, including the name of the man who okayed the faulty barrels, Nickerson. I'm not certain why Prior did this, but my guess is he hoped to convince me there was no point in defending Riorden. You see, in the first exchange, we had made Prior look very bad, so bad, in fact, that Senator Hampstead had flown in and raised hell with him. Prior wanted to prevent that from happening again; and he thought it would slow me down to know that their case against Riorden was unassailable.

"But getting back to the main point: Prior's information surprised me. Avery Meed had previously told me that the Riorden Company books were doctored by experts to hide what was going on. And yet Prior hadn't been sidetracked or fooled. My first thought was that Meed had overestimated the astuteness of his accountants.

"Later that day I told Riorden what I'd learned from Prior. Riorden, of course, must have known instantly that Prior was on the right track; but Riorden didn't tell me that. He did say, parenthetically, that Nickerson, the Government inspector, had died. I imagine Riorden made up his mind then to convert as much of his holdings as he could into cash and clear out. He had just learned that his wife was untrue, and my information told him that Prior would soon be breathing down his neck. And so I'm sure he started planning right then to get out."

MARTIN said: "It's a good guess."

"But it's not important," Jake said, "except as an interesting sidelight on life in America. The important thing was that I decided to pass on to Prior the news that Nickerson had died. I didn't get hold of Prior—he was leaving the office with Hampstead when I arrived—but I talked to his assistant, Gil Coombs, who is an accountant in charge of digging through the Riorden records.

"But Coombs knew nothing of Prior's information. The name Nickerson—supposedly gleaned from the Riorden Company records—meant absolutely nothing to him. He had to write it down on a piece of paper to make sure he wouldn't forget it.

"The significance of that escaped me at the time. But it eventually dawned. Prior couldn't have got his information from the Riorden Company records. If he had, Coombs would have known, too.

"Therefore Prior had lied. Secondly, I started to wonder where he had got his information. And that wasn't too difficult to guess: May Laval's diary, of course. Prior also lied about another thing. He said he didn't know Chicago, but as Coombs told me, he knew it well enough to act as a guide to its remotest joy spots."

Jake put out his cigarette, glanced at Prior and then back to Martin. "You can see what that meant? Prior knew May well enough to look through her diary, or else he'd seen it at some time when she wasn't around. Yet he had said he had never known or heard of May—obviously a flat lie.

"Now there were two questions to answer: One, when had he seen May's diary; and two, where had he seen it? I started with the where. Well, undoubtedly, in May's home. That's where the diary was until Avery Meed got hold of it. It was unlikely that Prior had seen it after Meed got it, because Meed took it home, and it was still there when Niccolo killed him. Niccolo had it until he mailed it to me, and the stuff he clipped from it that pertained to Riorden was in his apartment—so, there was just no way for Prior to have seen it after Meed got it. Therefore he saw the diary in May's apartment sometime before Meed arrived.

"That brought me to the when. Well, there was a Mr. X at May's home early that morning. Gary Nable got there at two o'clock, and she told him she was expecting a visitor at three. Now, that visitor was gone when Meed arrived—and when Meed arrived, May was dead."

Martin said: "And so you decided that Prior was Mr. X?"

"It was inevitable," Jake said. "It was just a question of arithmetic. Also, Prior had made one more damaging slip. Talking to me, he mentioned May's red pajamas—an item he couldn't have known about unless he'd been in her home that morning, at the time she was wearing the red Mandarin pajamas. I happen to remember she was wearing the red pajamas because Nable told me she was—but Prior's knowledge had to, and did, come at first hand. He had been to her home; he had seen the diary sometime between three and four, when Meed arrived and found May was dead. That's when he saw May in the red Mandarin pajamas."

"That's why you borrowed Murphy, eh?" Martin said.

"Of course. The minute I saw the clips from the diary, I knew I was right. There, in May's handwriting, was the same story Prior had told, with Nickerson's name and all the rest of it.

"And I also knew then that Prior had murdered Niccolo. Prior probably realized he'd made a mistake in telling me what he'd learned from May's diary. Any minute I might wake up and ask myself: *How did he know?* It was imperative that he get the clips from the diary and destroy them. But he didn't know where they were. Then Niccolo called him tonight with the hope of selling him information. Prior told him to go to hell—and then got out there as fast as he could to get the clips and also put Niccolo out of the way. He shot Niccolo and started a search for the clips. And got scared off by the prospect of someone finding him on the scene."

The patrolman had released Denise and she was rubbing her arms and watching Jake closely. Brian still lay on the floor. Nable looked as if he wanted desperately to speak, but couldn't think of an opening wedge.

"It occurred to me then," Jake said, "that the whole story would have to come from May. I began to wonder if there might be another diary—one covering the last day or so of her life. And of course there was. Not a diary, but a dictaphone recording."

He looked at Prior. "You forgot about that, didn't you?"

Prior spread his hands and looked at them expressionlessly, and then he sighed and rubbed his forehead with the tips of his fingers.

"It doesn't matter," he said thickly.

JAKE watched the irrelevant patterns made by the smoke curling from his cigarette. "I heard May's story tonight," he said. "The story was about Prior. How May met him in 1944 when he was a clerk for the War Resources Board. She reminisced about their brief and not too exciting affair, and discussed with considerable humor the fact that even then he had considered her a social liability. He couldn't be seen with her, and he couldn't introduce her to his friends. May was amused, because she delighted in making him feel that he was degrading himself.

"Then Prior swam back into May's ken, and she was doubly amused, because he'd heard about the book she was going to write, and he was terrified that she would include him in the cast. Prior knew that Senator Hampstead's reaction would be volcanic if his chief investigator turned up in a Sunday supplement rôle in an exposé of

wartime misconduct and chicanery. Hampstead would kick him right out of Washington.

"So Prior begged May not to use anything about him. And she agreed. But Prior wasn't satisfied. He asked to see the diary, to make sure he wasn't in it, and May said all right. And he had another request. Would May call his assistant, Coombs, and make an appointment with them for the next morning? Prior needed an excuse for knowing May—he knew he'd meet her—and if she made the first overture, that would explain his knowing her.

"Well, Prior saw the diary. And he wasn't in it. And then he realized that that wasn't enough. If May was going to be involved in the Riorden investigation—as she would have been—their previous relationship would be smoked out. Reporters would have got hold of it, and Riorden's lawyers and press agents would find out about it and use it for all it was worth to discredit Prior. He probably saw himself humiliated, excoriated, and broken because of the scandal.

"That is guesswork of course. I don't know what he was thinking about. But the fact is he put a sash around her throat and strangled her. Who can say why he did it? One person murders another, and later on it is decided it was a crime of passion, or revenge, of lust, or a hundred other things; but the real reason exists probably for one split second while the murder is committed, and after that the motivations become blurred and meaningless."

Jake smiled tiredly. "This recondite philosophizing is tossed in without charge. Getting back to the raw facts, however, Prior, in looking at May's diary, saw the dope on Riorden, and being efficient, made a note of it for use in his work. That, in the classic parlance, was his first and fatal mistake."

He glanced to Martin. "That's the works. It's all yours now."

Martin cleared his throat and walked over to Prior and put a hand on his shoulder. "You'd better get ready," he said. "I'm taking you in."

Prior was still rubbing his forehead. "All right," he said in a low voice.

THERE was a knock at the door, and Murphy came in, a portable dictaphone under his arm. He made a circle of his thumb and forefinger and smiled at Jake.

"Right on the dot."

"I don't think we'll need it," Martin said.

Murphy took an object wrapped in a handkerchief from his pocket and said, "This is for you, Lieutenant. Davis told me to bring it over. He said you were right."

Martin unwrapped the handkerchief carefully and displayed a nickel-plated .32 revolver. He smiled at Jake. "I knew that Prior and May were close friends for a month or so back in '43. We got that the way we get nearly everything in police work, by hunting around and asking a thousand questions. So when Prior lied about knowing her, I got interested and put a tail on him. Prior went out toward Niccolo's apartment tonight, but my man lost him. I told him to get over to Prior's hotel, too, and take a look around. This is what he found. It's probably the gun that killed Niccolo."

Jake took Sheila's arm and said to Martin: "You don't need me any more, I'm sure."

"Just one thing. What about those lipsticked crosses on the mirror, and so forth?"

Jake said, "Prior did that, I would guess, in an attempt to disguise the reason for her murder. He made it look like a Black Hand killing as a fiction-writer would imagine it. It should have been an immediate tip-off."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, it was corny, unimaginative and routine. If we had looked for someone like that, we'd have found Prior."

"Yeah?" Martin said dubiously, and then pushed Jake lightly on the shoulder. "Thanks, friend. If you need a job, come see me."

Jake grabbed Sheila and started for the door, but Brian Riorden, who had got to his feet, stepped in front of him.

"Wait a minute, smart man," he said. "What was the idea of teeing off on me and Denise?"

Jake studied him calmly and then glanced at Denise who had come to Brian's side.

"I kind of thought you deserved it," he said mildly. "You're a delightful pair of people, you know."

Denise flushed, but Brian forced a mocking smile to his lips.

"What have you got to be so damned superior about?" he said.

"Didn't you know?" Jake smiled. "I'm a noble character. I quit my job because it involved meeting too many people like you. Now if you'll excuse me—"

He opened the door and put his arm about Sheila's waist as they walked briskly toward the elevators.

"Darling, you were superb!" Sheila said. "I was so proud of you."

"Naturally," Jake grinned.

A SHOUT from behind caused them to stop; and when they turned, they saw Nable hurrying toward them along the corridor.

"Jake, old man," he said. "You can't run out like this. I need you."

"That's unfortunate," Jake said.

Nable looked as if he might weep. "Jake, you've just got a mild attack of morals. It'll pass over in a day or so. Come in and see me, eh? There'll be other accounts like Riorden, don't forget."

Jake patted Nable on the shoulder. "Thanks for reminding me of that, Gary. When my resolution falters, I'll hold that thought before me and take strength from it."

The elevator door slid open and Jake stepped inside with Sheila.

"Remember me to the mob," he said, as the door slid shut in Nable's stricken face.

As they came through the revolving doors, the doorman smiled politely at them and went into the street and began blowing his whistle.

Jake and Sheila stood close together watching the snow that fell like a dotted Swiss curtain between them and the cold night. The only sound was the cheery piping of the doorman's whistle.

Sheila turned suddenly and put her hands on his shoulders. There were a few snowflakes in her hair and her eyes were shining. "Let's go home," she said, "to my apartment. I still make wonderful breakfasts. Is that all right?"

Jake kissed her and said: "It's the best offer I've had today."

The doorman thanked Jake for the bill he put in his hand: and then he looked at it again, and said, *"Thank* you, sir," and closed the cab door behind them almost reverently.

They drove out Michigan Boulevard, and Sheila snuggled close to him.

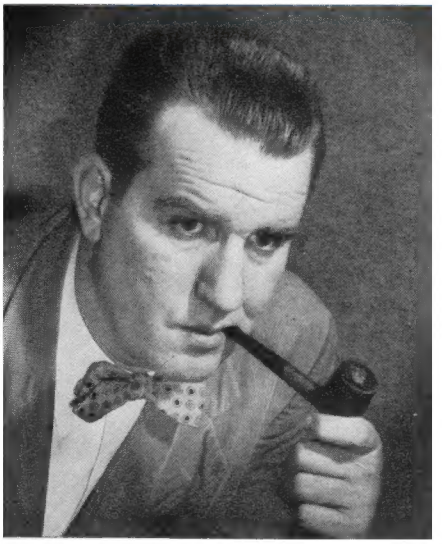
Something occurred to Jake then, and he put his hand carefully into his breast pocket and removed Mike Locarno's card. He looked at it with a slight smile. Mike wanted a public-relations man, and would probably be a liberal boss.

He glanced down at Sheila, and after a moment or so sighed philosophically and dropped Mike's card out the window.

Sheila stirred and said: "What was that?"

Jake kissed the top of her head. "Just the dear dead past," he said.

Who's Who *in this* Issue



William McGivern

"VERY COLD FOR MAY" is the third mystery novel by William McGivern. He has also written many short stories, and has had a good deal of experience in the magazine publishing business.

All three of his books have Chicago backgrounds, but that is only a literary preference. He lives in Philadelphia, and is the husband of Maureen Daly, author of "Seventeenth Summer" and editorial associate on *The Ladies' Home Journal*. His pet pastime is badminton; and his favorite author, he reports, is Thomas Wolfe.

Charles A. King, Jr.

A NATIVE Kentuckian, Charles A. King, Jr., is a retired colonel of infantry. Following his graduation from West Point, he saw service in the Mexican border disturbances, and served in both World Wars. Between times he performed routine duty at various army posts (he commanded three) both at home and abroad.

He writes: "Since the medicoes—over my vociferous protests—decided that on account of physical disability I was no longer able to fight, I am making a sincere effort to catch up on my sleep, my reading, and my fishing."

Colonel King has always been an avid reader and student of history (he was an instructor in history for five years at West Point), and he is particularly interested in what Sir Walter Scott so aptly called, "the by-ways of history:" accounts of the half-forgotten men and dimly remembered events that nevertheless had a definite influence on "the record of the march of civilization." His "Scanderbeg, A Forgotten Great Captain," is an example of this specialized historical study and research.

William L. Rohde

IT'S just as well, probably that I've settled down at thirty-two. I've ridden with the horse cavalry, marched with the infantry when we wore cloth wrap-puttees, sailed with the Coast Guard and Maritime Service, and held so many jobs they read like a parody on "what the writer ought to do for experience."

Since the war I've found a profitable and interesting field in sales promotion and advertising. I live on Long Island with my wife and three sons, traveling enough on business to keep the wanderlust under control. I've seen most of the world—but I'd like to see it again.

Quite a number of my stories and articles have appeared in various magazines, and my favorite background is railroading, perhaps because I was once a Morse telegrapher. I've also written a lot of radio and television material.

Of course, I use foreign backgrounds when an idea seems to fit them, but

WILLIAM L. ROHDE

I stick to the places I've seen. "Watch the Angles, Comrade!" more or less wrote itself when I began to remember how like their American opposite numbers are many citizens of the Soviet Union.

My most pressing project right now is to find a place in Florida where three active boys can keep busy while Dad finishes a book. The book — about railroad detective *Mohawk Daniels* — is overdue. Partly because Dad's been busy, mostly because Dad is lazy.

STEVE McNEIL

Robert Patterson

"I WAS six years in China," writes Robert Patterson, "for the United Press (briefly), the China Press (for quite a while), and for L'Agence Havas, the French News Agency. For the past four years—until I lost my job, recently —I have been the *San Francisco Examiner's* columnist, Freddie Francisco. Subsequently I syndicated myself to Northern California newspapers for a while. Now I am in the business of writing magazine stories—I hope."

Steve McNeil

BORN Spokane, Washington, November 7, forty years ago, and except for the war years and my latest move two years ago into Oregon, thought it was a good place to be and never left it. Learned to read, write and cipher at Washington State College.

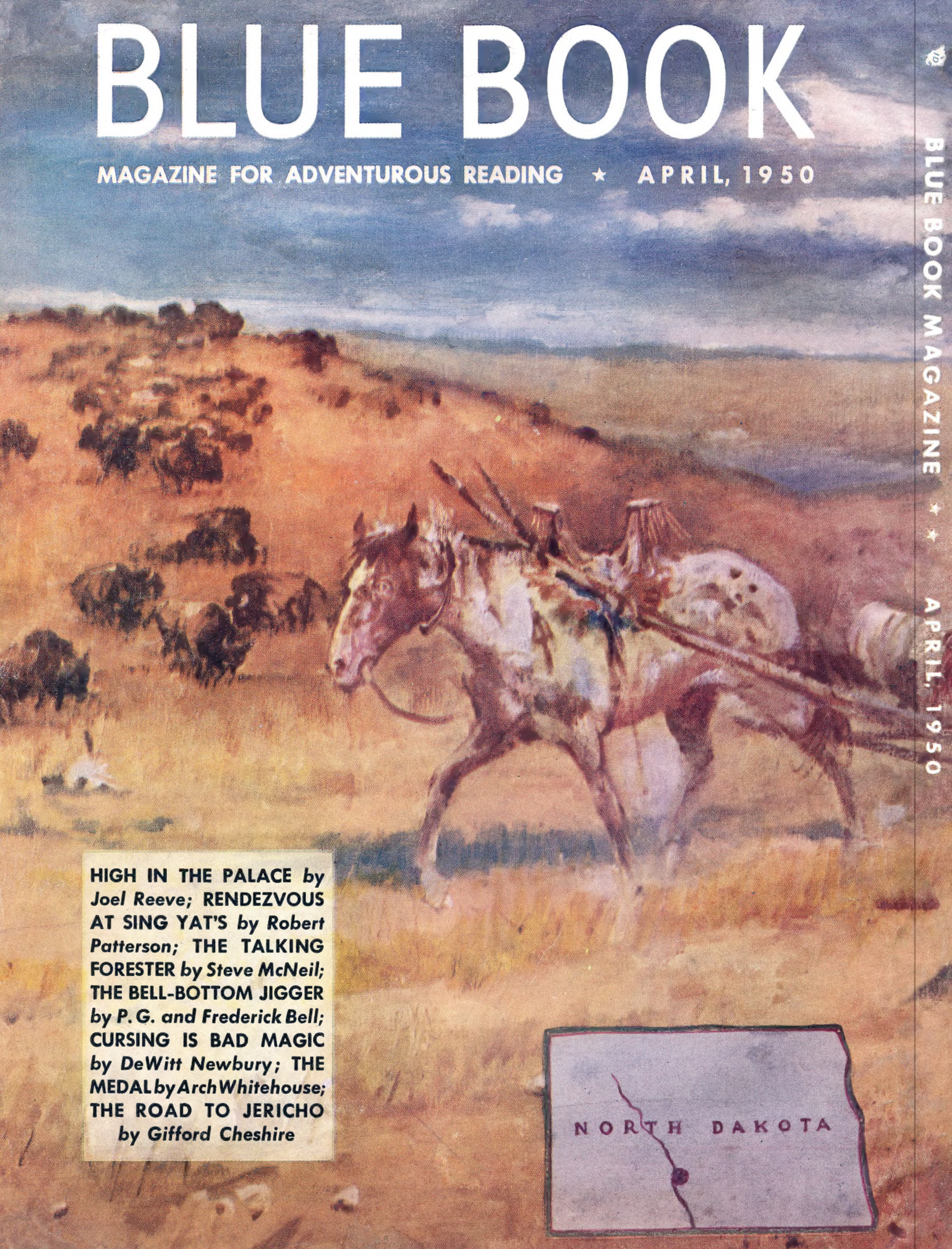
Started writing for magazines in 1939, in addition to making a living at a variety of jobs from grocery clerk to garage mechanic. Sold to the *Satevepost* in 1941 and was so overwhelmed that I joined the Army. They were uncoöperative and shipped me to Alaska. Started writing again in 1944, and have been free-lancing since 1945: have sold to *Satevepost, Redbook, Liberty, Ladies Home Journal,* and others.

Got the idea for "The Talking Forester" by getting into a bull session with Chuck Wood, who is a forester for Crown-Willamette here in Oregon. The idea stemmed from an incident about a forester who had substantially the same problem as the hero of the yarn—trying to sell the idea of modern forestry to old-time loggers. Actually, the outfits like Crown-Willamette and Weyerhaeuser out here in the West don't have to be sold the idea of forestry. Crown is operating on a sustained yield basis which will guarantee timber forever; and the forester is, nowadays, a very important guy.

Regarding the picture—I am the guy behind the wheel as our dog, Vicky, doesn't yet have her driver's license.

BLUE BOOK

MAGAZINE FOR ADVENTUROUS READING ★ APRIL, 1950



HIGH IN THE PALACE *by Joel Reeve;* RENDEZVOUS AT SING YAT'S *by Robert Patterson;* THE TALKING FORESTER *by Steve McNeil;* THE BELL-BOTTOM JIGGER *by P. G. and Frederick Bell;* CURSING IS BAD MAGIC *by DeWitt Newbury;* THE MEDAL *by Arch Whitehouse;* THE ROAD TO JERICHO *by Gifford Cheshire*

BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE ★ APRIL, 1950